ISSUE 41 FEBRUARY 1991 £1.60

ACE

ST ■ AMIGA ■ C64 ■ CPC ■ SPECTRUM ■ PC ■ NINTENDO ■ SEGA

THE ULTIMATE GAMES MAGAZINE

ADVANCED COMPUT

MENT

1991 New Year Holiday Special

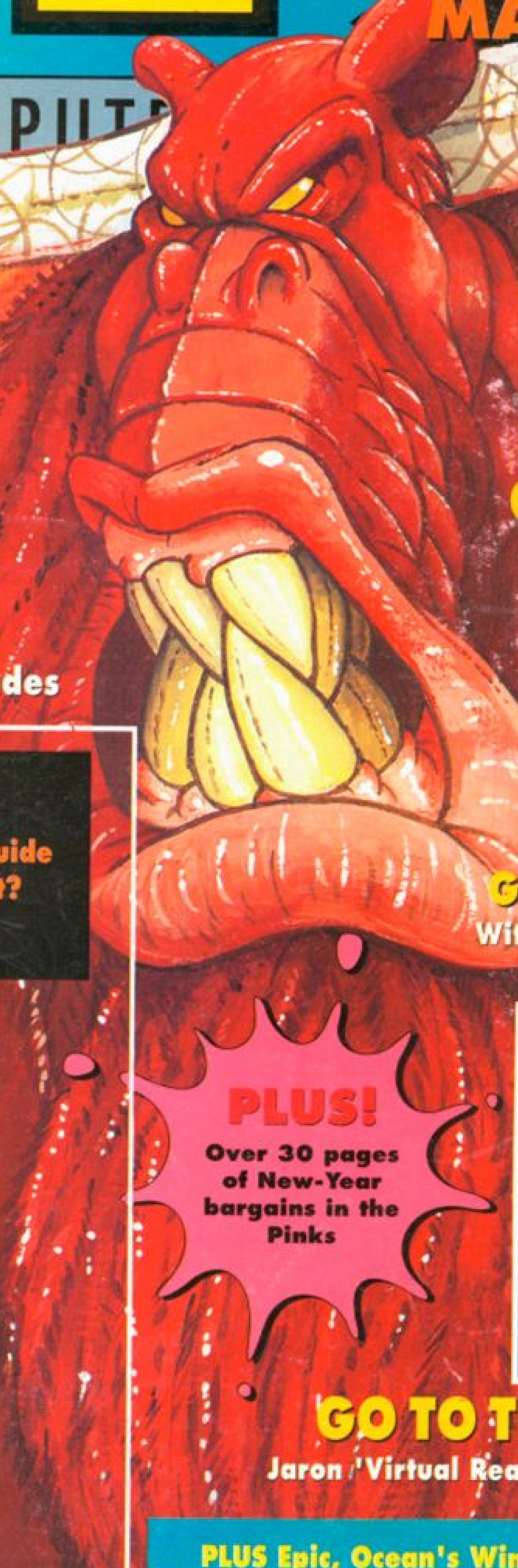
EXCLUSIVE

GO TO HELL!

Incredible 16bit/CD visit to Hades

GO TO MARS!

...with Origin's latest marsterpiece



Corks!

Where's your FREE and EXCLUSIVE guide to Advanced Cartridge Entertainment? Ask the chap behind the counter.

GO TO THE ZOO

...and puzzle over RGB

GO BACK IN TIME!

With our list of ACE classics

PLUS!

Over 30 pages of New-Year bargains in the Pinks

GO TO THE BARBERS!

Jaron 'Virtual Reality' Lanier interviewed

PLUS Epic, Ocean's Wing Commander rival; ECO Phantoms; Toyota Celica; Battle Command...

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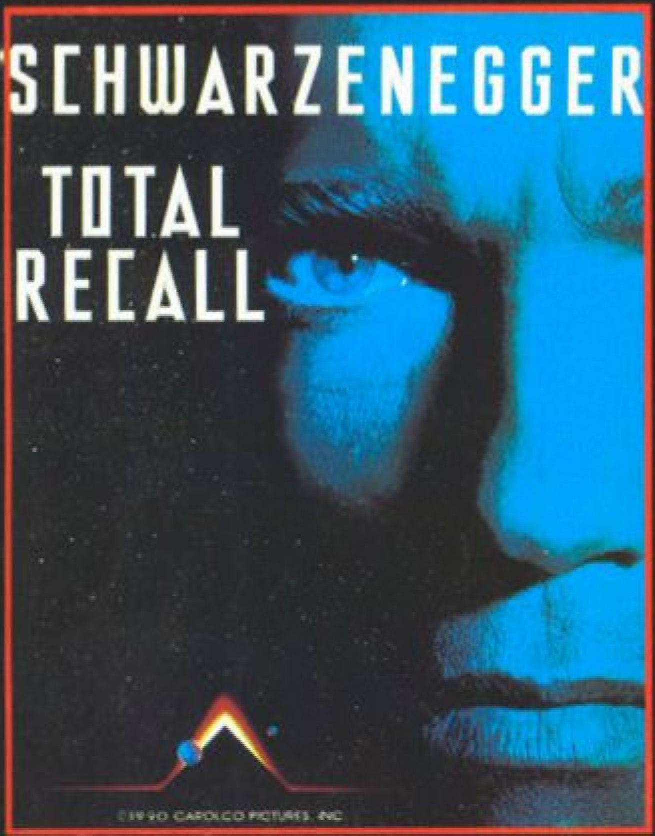
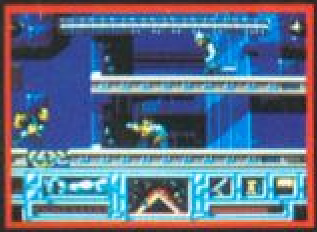
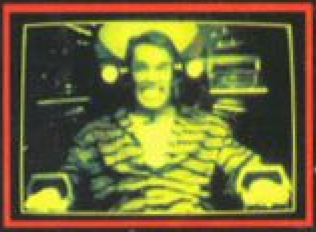
POWER







As
Doug Quaid
you have been
haunted by recurring
dreams of another life on Mars.
You are drawn to Rekall Incorporated, a unique travel service specializing in implanting fantasies into the minds of those who desire to turn their dreams into reality.

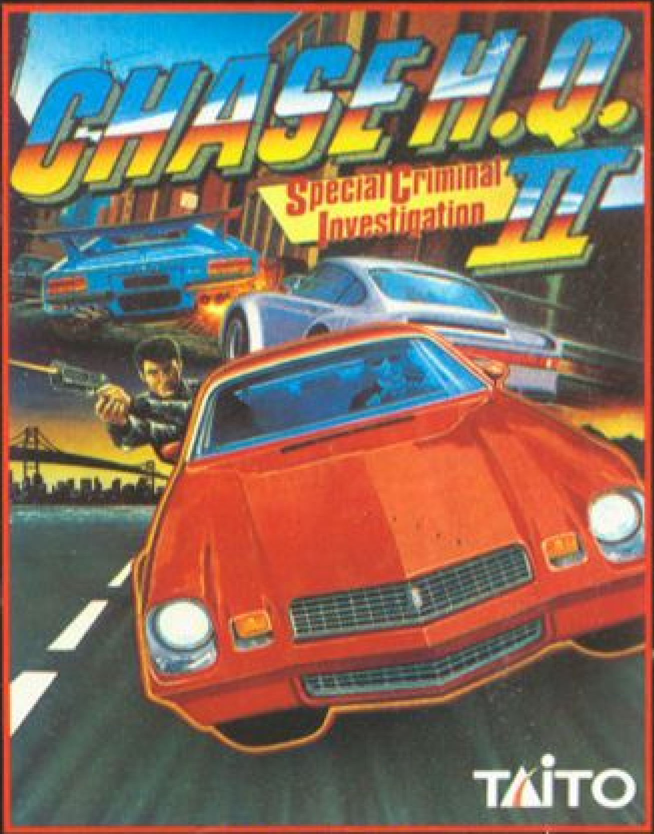
THE EGO TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Experience
the horror as your dreams
turn into hideous nightmares. Suddenly your every move is monitored by would-be assasins. You discover the surreal truth -

YOU'RE NOT YOU - YOU'RE ME

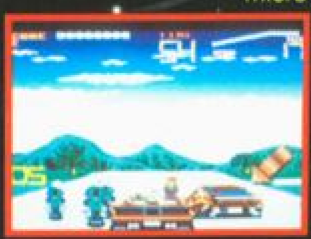
You
must travel
to Mars to discover
your true identity - your mission
is now a journey of non-stop action, strange mutants, futuristic vehicles and a startling array of weaponry all captured in superbly executed graphics and a game play that compliments the success of the year's top movie.

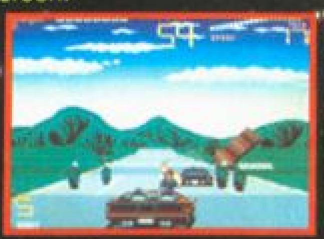
CHASE HQ 2 Special Criminal Investigation,
continuing where CHASE HQ left off.
The Arcade thriller takes you from the bright lights of Paris to the rugged terrain of th Sahara.
Your mission is to track down,
chase and apprehend
the dangerous
criminals.



It's FASTER
Explosive power sends
you bulleting through various terrains -
hold the line or plough the fields!

It's TOUGHER
The criminals wield some
heavy hardware - but so do you!
You can shoot but you must dodge their flak...
heavy gunfire, trucks unloading their cargo onto your bonnet... it's the meanest pursuit game to hit the micro screen.





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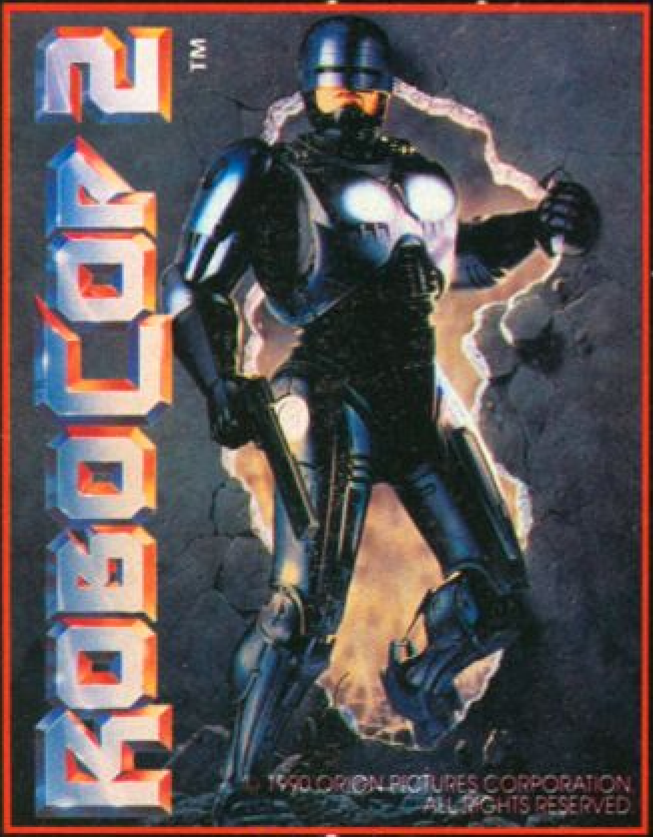
SURGE

Seven levels of muscle-straining, reflex-testing, sideways scrolling fury! Destroy the lethal drug Nuke, face a stream of deadly Nuke gangs, and then - if you survive - face the terror that is

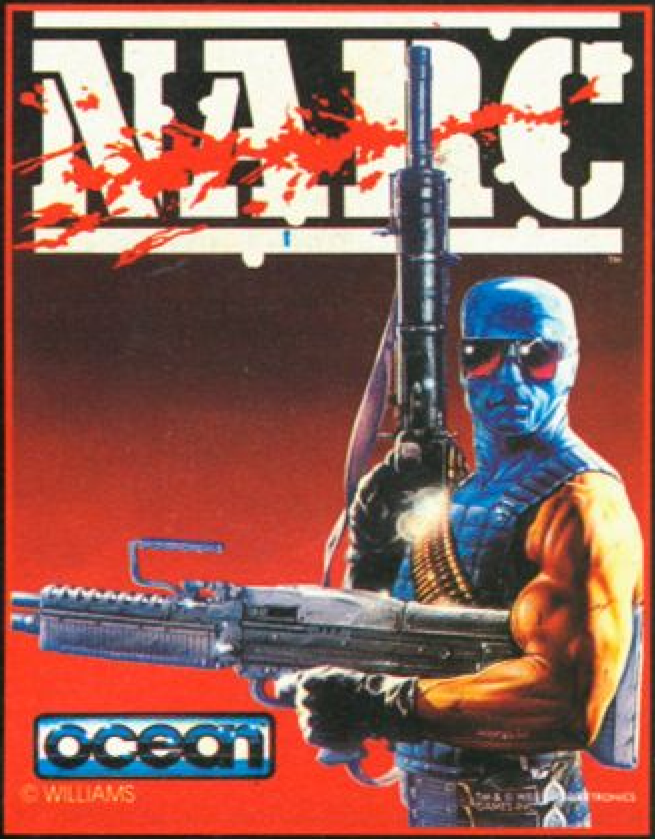
ROBOCOP 2!



MORE THAN A GAME - ROBOCOP 2 IS THE PRIME DIRECTIVE.

NARC The arcade action thriller with the BIG finish. Infiltrate the criminal underworld - your mission is to seek out and destroy the king pin of the MR BIG CORPORATION - if you get that far.

You'll have to outwit his enormous army of body guards... gangs of charisma-bypass patients in trench coats, the bullet brain with the build of a rhinoceros and the breath of a dung beetle, packs of vicious canine yappies, the psychotic clown with an evil sense of humour - you'll die, but not laughing! Then there's the gas guzzling cadillac jock - a cool specimen, elbow hanging on the door rail, a serious looking piece in his hand and ready to blow you away as he rolls down main street leaving you coughing lead.



It's not all bad!... You've got a chopper to back you up, a mean, shiny street machine, some heavy metal hardware and some pretty neat moves. And what about the king pin... did I say he was Mr. Big? No, he's

MR BIG!

ocean®

AMSTRAD . COMMODORE . SPECTRUM
ATARI ST . CBM AMIGA

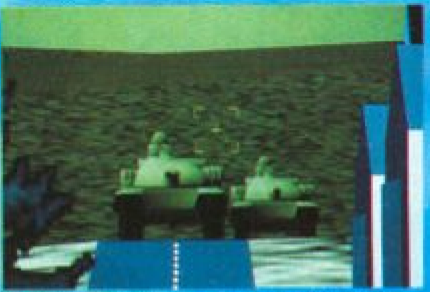
41

"Gosh! What a CLEVER little gnomesy-womesy you are! Goo-goo diddums, little pop-pet! And watch out for those *nasty* trollsy-wollsies!"

King Graham II of Daventry, *Kings Quest IX*, by Roberta Williams III (see pages 50/51 of this issue). Emmanuel Strikneen is on holiday.

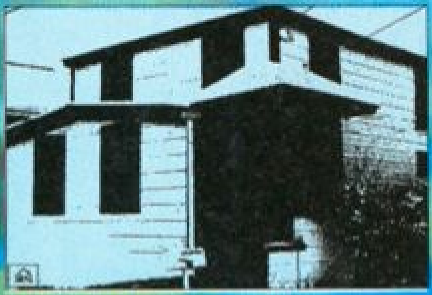
reviews

The latest releases on computer, console and CD go under the microscope.



British military personnel have been trained on Marconi simulators for real-life combat encounters. Help. See page 26.

After Marconi, it's wargames for the boys thanks to *Battle Command* from Ocean. How have the Manchester civvies done? Find out on page 61



Uncle Buddy's Fun House – is this the future of interactive fiction? See page 30.

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*Gremlin's **Littil Divil** won't be on the shelves until late '91. But of course, ACE has the first exclusive preview.*

THE GREATEST!

Over the years, ACE has given you the definitive ratings and reviews of over 1,000 pieces of software. And we've spent literally months compiling and collating each and every game to produce the grandly (although not untruly) titled; Ace Guide To the Greatest Games On Earth.

We've broken down the Gamesworld into easy-to define categories. Now you can tell at a glance which is the best shoot-em-up, the best fighting game, the best adventure and so on. We don't expect that you'll agree with everything we say, but we think you'll agree with most.

If you've just bought yourself a new machine, or have exhausted the current supply of games, this guide is for you.

This month we have the first part, set for conclusion next time, along with some handy tips as to how you can actually obtain some of these forgotten masterpieces. First stop, however, is page 63.

```
You are in a hidden path with trolls foot
prints
> GO
> E
> SU
> NE
```

You'll certainly be seeing stars at this party – Lord British has his own private observatory at the top of his home...

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The Epic Team - Digital Image Design, headed up by Martin Kenwright unveil their latest project to Rik Haynes. Read super-confident Kenwright's amazing challenge to all programmers - "Beat my routine and win £1,000!"

NEW ERA

ACE gets a new editor next month as Jim Douglas takes over the reins from Steve Cooke and Britain's top entertainment technology magazine strides into the '90s. Steve's been with the magazine (with one short break) ever since it started and is now leaving to pursue new areas of advanced computer entertainment. Rest assured that he'll still be contributing to the magazine on a regular basis. To celebrate his departure, we've reviewed all those games which should have been finished in time for the Christmas issue, including *Robocop 2, Chase HQ 2* and *Line of Fire*. Plus an exclusive look at Gremlin's stunning CD game; Ocean's answer to *Wing Commander*, *EPIC*; state-of-the-art Marconi sims; a painstakingly crafted Guide to the Greatest Games ever, and a horrible story on how you can actually *eat* Tetris...

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KISSING THE PINK

-89-

A quick glance at our Pinks will solve all your new-machine queries and needs. And it's packed with bargains too!

King's Quest 5: 256 colours, 9.7 megabytes, and a Barbara Cartload of schmaltz. Tiptoe to page 50...

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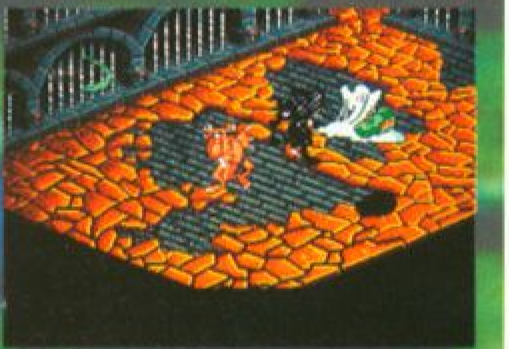
89 **IN THE PINK**
Machine specific columns, buyers' guides, juicy mail-order ads, adventure tips...and more



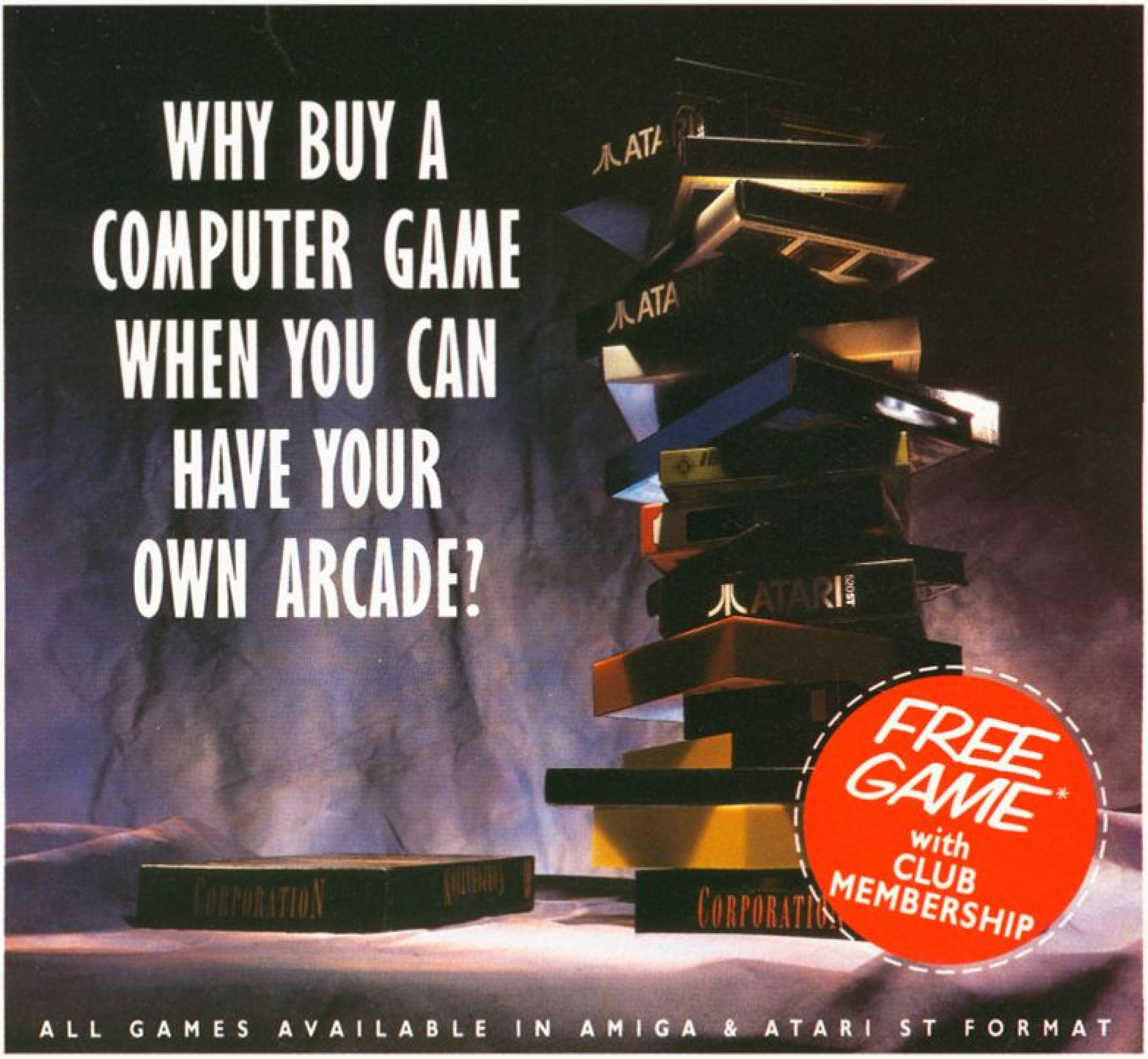
Littil Divil - Hellish hi-jinks from Gremlin.

COVER STORY

ACE, in its ever-expanding quest for hot stories from around the world visits sunny Sheffield to report on *Littil Divil*, Gremlin Graphics' CD Amiga game which boasts some of the hottest graphics we've seen. Ex Sullivan-Bluth programmers have already put in a year's work on the project and there's a further nine months to go. The game chronicles the Divil's passage through the flaming corridors of Hades, with enormous hand-drawn monsters and beautiful scenery. Turn to page 72 for the full story.

ACE

FEBRUARY 1991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NEWS

Your first Sony

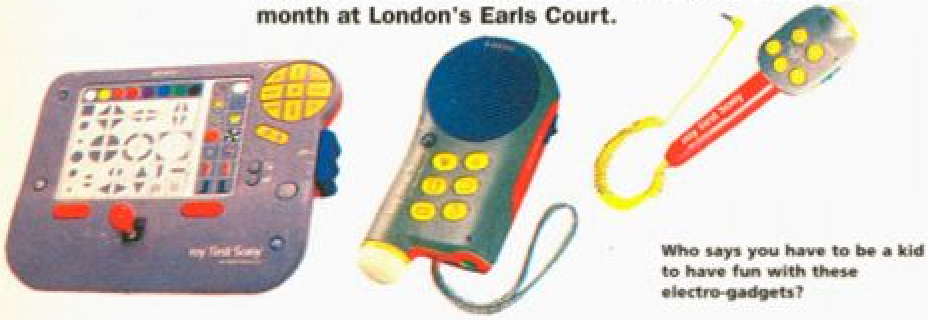
Sony, the leading Japanese electronics company, has produced a new series of great gadgets for preteen kids.

Following the £50 price slash of the Lynx colour handheld console to £129.99, Atari has announced a string of new software titles due to be launched over the coming months - including 720°, Grid Runner, Pacland, Ninja Gaiden, S.T.U.N. Runner, Cyberball and Pit Fighter. Atari hopes to have at least 100,000 Lynx owners in Britain before the start of spring.

My First Sony creative products are split into three fun-filled gizmo's. The graphic computer costs 25000 yen (around £100) and plugs into a normal television set. Children can draw any kind of picture by simply pressing the appropriate shape and colour keys and manipulate these on-screen images using the built-in joystick. This device can be thought of as the electronic equivalent of a children's painting book.

The other two Sony gadgets are sound machines for making special sound effects (£40) and electronically changing a child's voice (£20).

There's no reason why these My First Sony products couldn't be distributed outside Japan (with some minor modifications needed to be made to the computer). They may be on show during the British Toy Fair later this month at London's Earls Court.



Who says you have to be a kid to have fun with these electro-gadgets?

Carrier Airwing

Birmingham-based US Gold is set to commence work converting Capcom's latest coin-op onto home computer format. Carrier Airwing, another game in the UN Squadron style of scrolling shoot'em-ups, is currently proving popular in arcade halls across the country.

In the game you have to battle through 10 'death-defying' missions to destroy the ultimate weapon. Along the way you attack the enemy's arsenal and a giant fort, and fly a diagonal ascent from low altitude close to a highway and then vertically descent into a valley.

Carrier Airwing also incorporates breathtaking air-to-air combat over cities, valleys, deserts and ocean. Fortunately, you have the choice of flying three fighters.

Rick Ford from New York flys the F-14 Tom Cat. Ford was placed first in his class at the Navy's 'Top Gun' fighter combat school and is unmatchable in air-to-air combat. The FA-18A Hornet is flown by Louisiana-born James Roy, a member of the U.S. Navy 'Blue Angels' acrobatics team. Roy's adroit handling of his plane gives him an advantage against both air and ground foes. Finally, Mark Olson takes to the skies in a A-6E Intruder. A former U.S. Navy squad leader, Olson is known for being able to drop a bomb anywhere under any conditions.

Carrier Airwing should be available on a micro near you before the end of '91. US Gold has yet to decide on the best people to convert the game.

It's a cracker

Salerno from Illinois in America has introduced a new snack cracker based around the Soviet Union's popular puzzle game. Could this be the natural food for a perfect Tetris hi-score?

Tetris Crackers, a light buttery bite-size snack, come in five Tetris puzzle shapes. These new snacks contain no artificial flavours, no preservatives and are low in saturated fats.

Salerno also sells Super Mario Bros. 3 chocolate cookies inspired by the cult Nintendo arcade platform game.

Japenese taking over the leisure biz

Go-Video in Arizona, USA has filed a federal anti-trust lawsuit seeking to block the recent merger between the American entertainments company, MCA, and the giant Japanese electronics firm, Matsushita. MCA is not named in the action.

MCA has interests in Universal Studios and Yosemite National Park in California, and Matsushita's brand-names read like a who's who in consumer electronics with companies like Panasonic, JVC and Technics on its extensive list.

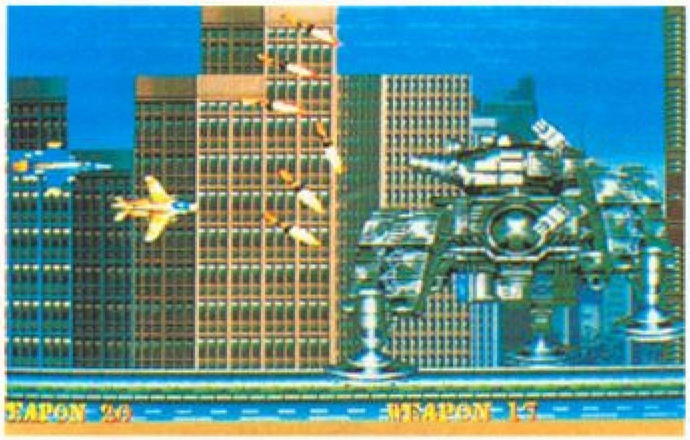
Last year, Sony merged with CBS Records and has now renamed the New York-based company to Sony Music Corporation. Sony already owns Columbia Pictures.

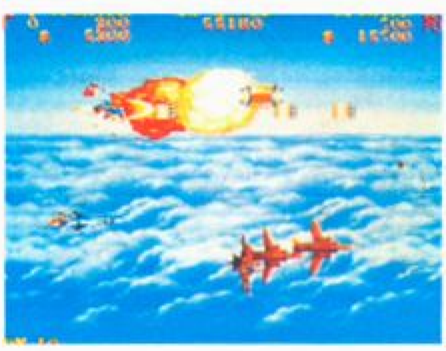
These Japanese takeover bids may not be good news for American business-people but they could pave the way for an exciting new range of audio-visual electro-entertainments decks like CD-I and revolutionary portable video and musical playback devices. For Japanese companies like Sony and Matsushita now own the hardware and software of the world's major movie and music biz. Only Walt Disney is left in American hands... are there any Tokyo takers? We wait for the Osaka fax with baited breath!

Smashed and Grabbed

Williams' *Smash TV,* where contestants mercilessly kill each other to the applause of a bloodthirsty audience, was voted the most innovative videogame at the recent AMOA coin-op convention in New Orleans.

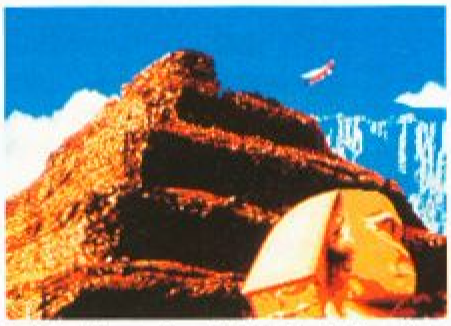
Ocean has grabbed the computer rights with Probe *(Golden Axe)* handling the conversions due in September.





Intruder alert or should that be a Tom Cat has nine lives!

Fighting the boss at the end of stage 2.



Half a million copies of Mighty Bombjack on the Nintendo Entertainment System have already been sold.

Would you rather Jack?

Joytec is Canada has developed a large-screen interactive golf simulator for punters who wish to practise their putts and swings in comfort. The simulator is based around a laserdisc system giving it the flexibility to mimic new golf courses very quickly and relatively cheaply.

Elite is set to release a follow-up to Bombjack, its highly successful conversion of Tecmo's platform arcade game. The appropriately titled Mighty Bombjack has 17 levels with some 250 screens of action.

"Our first Bombjack title, released way back in 1986, and our sequel Bombjack II in 1987, were both attributed with the number one Gallup chart position for several weeks and with the release of Mighty Bombjack we are confident that we can make this a hat trick for Tecmo and us," says a confident Elite.

So it's over to Amiga, ST, PC and C64 gameplayers to prove Elite right (or wrong) when Mighty Bombjack is released later this month.

Laserdisks Games are Back

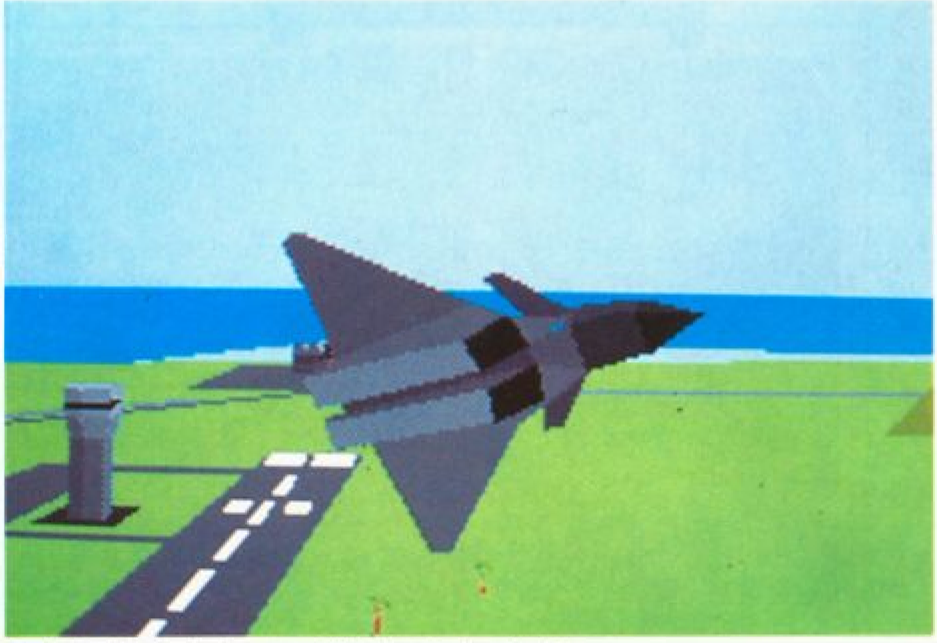
In a surprising move, the American Laser Company has released a new laserdisc arcade game called Mad Dog McCree.

Laserdisc technology dates back to the late 70's when Pioneer in the States produced the first optical video disc system for the consumer. Other companies soon followed with their own systems - like Philips' LaserVision - and digital video was born.

The first generation of laserdisc video games, such as Don Bluth's Dragon's Lair and Space Ace, were released in the early eighties. Unfortunately, though they were initially very popular their primitive technology made them very unreliable and they quickly faded from the coin-op scene. The American Laser Company hopes it can overcome these reliability problems by employing state-of-the-art technology in its new laserdisc game.

Mad Dog McCree is a Western adventure featuring shoot-outs at the cowboy coral, saloon bar and Sheriff's office. You play the latest gunslinger in town. For the best effects, Mad Dog McCree can be played on a massive 70" monitor.

Atari Games - producer of Paperboy, Hard Drivin' and S.T.U.N. Runner - has signed up the European rights to the Mad Dog McCree coin-op. No company has claimed the home computer or console conversion deals yet.



Could Retaliator be the fastest ever flight-sim played on the PC?

Retaliator lands on PC

The award-winning flight-sim from Digital Image Design and Ocean is due be launched on the PC before the spring, and make no mistake this baby is fast... and better too!

"We've got a 20MHz 386PC and it's running at 30-40 frames a second," offers Martin Kenwright at Digital Image Design. "The slowest it'll go down to is 10 frames that's when you're flying over a complex city with over half a dozen fighters chasing after you." Amazingly, F-29 Retaliator runs at the same speed on a standard Amstrad PC as it does on the Amiga.

Digital Image Design has a rather unfamiliar problem with the PC version... it's moving too fast and they've got to slow it down. "It really does fly," laughs Kenwright.

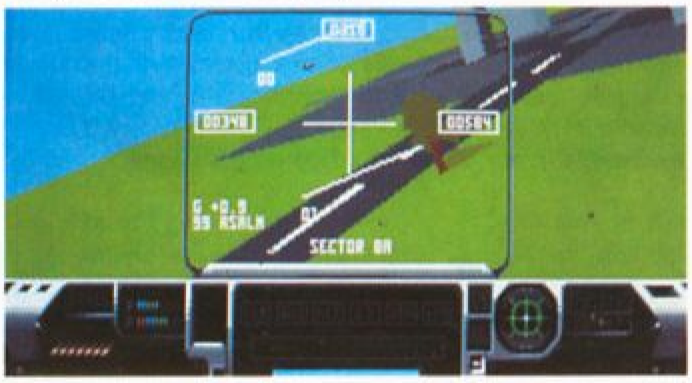
PC gamesters will also get more for their hard earned cash in this version of acknowledged flight simulation than other gameplayers have, as the world's have been filled in from their Amiga and ST cousins. "We've created a nicer environment with more rivers, trees, etc," explains Kenwright. The PC version of F-29 Retaliator has been programmed by Jason Brooke, who previously worked with micro musician, Dave Whittaker. "It's his first major project and he's handled it really well."

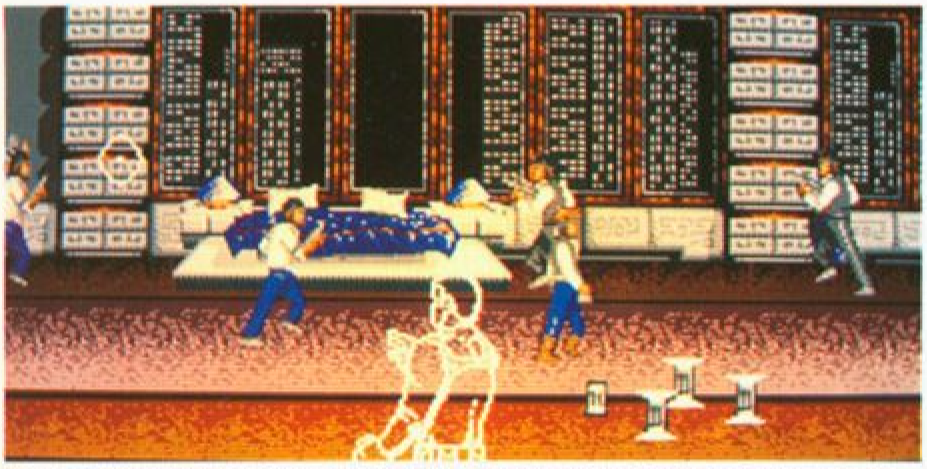
You'll be able to link-up two PCs together and play head-to-head Retaliator with a friend - or the boss! "Comm's is the big one," believes Kenwright, "it's the first ever time a frame compensated com-link has been implemented." Basically, this allows fair play between gamesters with different classes of PC. People with 8MHz machines won't be blown out of the sky by 386 turbo-nutters - unless the 386 owner is a better pilot! "This has been a nightmare to code, but it's wicked. Two machines on a cable is absolutely fabulous."

Digital Image Design is promising a bug-free game this time. "It's the best Retaliator of them all. Everything has been enhanced - from radars to weapon systems," says Kenwright. You'll be able to find out for yourself when F-29 Retaliator is ready for release in the spring.

TOP DANCE TRACKS
1. ALL TOGETHER NOW - THE FARM
2. KINKY AFRO - HAPPY MONDAYS
3. EXORCIST - THE SCIENTIST

Apparently, criminals are using orange juice to steal consoles and computers from Dixons retail outlets. These techno-thieves pour this vitamin-rich liquid over display models to short-circuit the store's electronic security systems. Beware of anybody offering you a cheap Lynx with sticky fire buttons in your local pub.





Imageworks describes its Predator 2 computer game as an "exciting 3D sideways scrolling shoot'em-up that captures all the action and terror of what is certain to be a box office smash".

Predator is meaner than ever

It sees the heat of your body. It smells the heat of your fear. It hunts for sport. It kills for pleasure. It's the Predator.

The fearsome Predator alien is back in an exciting sci-fi thriller film from 20th Century Fox with Imageworks providing a game across all major micro formats.

Following on from its blockbuster predecessor starring European muscle-man Arnold Schwarzenegger, the movie is set about five years from now in Los Angeles. Mike Harrigan, a tough LA cop played by Danny Glover (Mel Gibson's partner in the Lethal Weapon movies), is investigating a series of mysterious murders while an intense street-war rages between Jamaican and Colombian drug barons.

In the Imageworks title, you play Harrigan in an Operation Wolf-style pop-up and shoot-it game. You have the choice of four weapons, such as a pump-action shotgun or grenade-launcher, with the full-back of a Magnum pistol. This four-level shoot'em-up is based around scenes in the movie such as a subway massacre and the violent confrontation between Harrigan and the Predator in a downtown slaughterhouse.

"Predator 2 is packed with fast and furious action and the most stunning FX ever seen on the big screen, we are determined to capture the action and excitement of this sure fire film hit," says Imageworks. The game and movie are due in April. The game will be available on the Amiga, Spectrum, PC, C64, ST and CPC.

Walsall-based Arc Developments (Forgotten Worlds) is coding the game and Stephen Hopkins (Nightmare on Elm Street 5) is directing the motion picture.

The original Predator film was turned into a game by Activision and System Three back in '87. Fans of the Predator vs Alien comic's should be pleased to hear Activision is turning this successful series into a Nintendo video game. There are also rumours of a Predator vs Aliens movie.

ACE in Japan

• More frustrated queues of gameplayers have appeared outside Japanese stores since the recent launch of Nintendo's Super Famicom console. Orders for this much sought-after 16-bit machine have exceeded two million units. Regrettably, it seems Nintendo can only produce 300,000 units per month until March. The Super Famicom is scheduled for an American launch at the beginning of September, the British release should come soon after that.

• There is only one bomb left. It will explode at 7 o'clock tonight. Do not touch it! I will repeat your orders: 'Capture the Russian Fog. This is the only way to avoid being sunk. This order is final'. So begins Nostalgia, the new 'intelligence action game' from Takeru in Japan. The game is set in 1907 aboard a passenger steam-liner crossing the North Atlantic. Nostalgia is filled with intrigue and puzzles to solve. Available for the X68000, it costs 11800 yen (around £47) and comes complete with a scene-setting audio CD. Who knows the secret of the pink rose?

• Populous fans in Japan can now buy a compact disc filled with the music and sound effects from the game. Unfortunately, Bullfrog - the creators of Populous and Powermonger - will not see a penny in royalties because of unfair copyright and licensing laws.

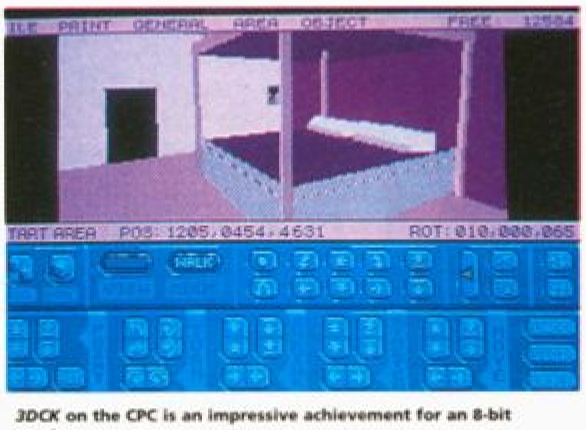
• Capcom, the Japanese coin-op company behind Commando, Ghosts 'n' Goblins and Strider, has been floated on the Tokyo stock exchange.

• Images of Andrew Fletcher, Martin Gore and Alan Wilder from hard-synth Basildon band, Depeche Mode, are appearing in a dream-like CD-ROM adventure game for the aging Japanese PC-8801SR computer. Mirrors also incorporates personalities from Duran Duran and Max Headroom. The game costs 9800 yen (approximately £40). Mirrors is currently being transferred to the FM Towns.

• Home Data has converted the world's most odd-ball coin-op onto the Fujitsu FM Towns computer. Marble Madness is regarded by many players as Atari Games' best ever arcade game. It's also available on the Sharp X68000 and PC-9801.

• Work has just begun on the Super Famicom version of the ACE-Rated Powermonger. Top Japanese games house, Imagineer, is handling the tough job of converting Bullfrog's superlative strategy game. Imagineer previously converted Populous onto the Super Famicom and Maxis' Sim City onto the Sega Megadrive.

• Special thanks to our friends at ASCII Corporation for their help.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WALK

3DCK on the CPC is an impressive achievement for an 8-bit version.

DIY WORLDS

Soon you'll be able to build your own 3D animated universe with Domark/Incentive's new 3D Construction Kit...

Boss Ian Andrew holding a virtual ball created by *3DCK* and demonstrating the power of the 'transparent' colour mode. For further details of this mode, see ACE 1991 April issue...

There's no doubt about it, this could be the most impressive game creation utility ever released. Not only does it allow you to create run-time modules complete with animation, shoot-em-up capability, puzzle solving, and maze exploration – but it enables you to do it all in solid 3D, using a system that's even better than Freescape!

Incentive have already brought out two well-known game construction utilities: *GAC* and *STAC*. *GAC* was notable for being the first fully-integrated graphic adventure creator and STAC did the same thing, but with more features, on the Atari ST. However, both these games had one big drawback: they could only create adventures, and in that respect they lost out seriously to products like Mandarin's *AMOS* and Palace's *Shoot-Em-Up Construction Kit* which could be used by non-programmers to produce more conventional game types.

No such problem with *3D Construction Kit*. When Incentive first launched their Freescape solid 3D system in the form of *Driller*, and followed it up with the very successful *Castle Master*, the company demonstrated a convincing lead in the creation of 3D world environments. Now, they've put all their resources into *3DCK*, giving everybody the chance to build their own 3D universes – to a standard even higher than before. What's more it'll be available for Amiga, ST, PC and 8-bit formats as well.

LEGO FOR GAMESTERS

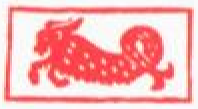
You can create, edit, and manipulate 3D solid polygonal shapes via a user-friendly control panel. Triangles, cubes, hexagons, and pentagons can be generated and combined to form more complex or irregular shapes, each having its own position and status in your 3D environment. What's more, all objects can have conditions and animations associated with them, enabling you to build up a complete game.

Above the control panel is a window onto the world you're building. You can move about this world during the editing process, either examining what you've done or adding/editing other objects. For example, you can add a cube which will then appear in front of you. Then you can shrink, rotate, stretch and otherwise change its shape until it's just the way you want it. You then place it in exactly the right position, give it a name (makes editing easier later), and perhaps plonk a triangle on top and some rectangles on the side to make it look like a house. Although you're limited to regular polygons, you can in fact combine picture elements and use a 'transparent' option to create some very complex game elements.

***3DCK* is a very powerful system and allows you to create environments that are actually a lot more detailed and complex than those in, say, *Castlemaster*. One other big point in *3DCK's* favour is that it is very memory efficient. Objects take up only a few bytes and even a**

THE FUTURE STARTS HERE!

ACE astrologer Rik Haynes with your stars for the coming year...



CAPRICORN

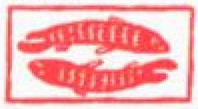
December 21-January 19

Creative urges burst the bubble of mediocrity surrounding your life. The idea of a game construction kit will be more appealing than ever before. Think it through before you start your project, does the guardian sprite at the end of level two take too many shots to kill?

AQUARIUS

January 20-February 18

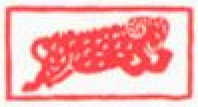
You're restless and probably more susceptible to new gameplay techniques. You'll receive stern warnings from an older player. Your year is full of cheerful introductions. You won't find a better time than April to get something off your chest by writing into Tricks 'n' Tactics.



PISCES

February 19-March 20

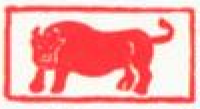
Try to solve Virgin's Alice in Wonderland by the middle of February before the Sun moves onto a new sign. It's likely that you can do best by being optimistic. You deserve something better than your collection of Magnetic Scrolls games, perhaps you should try something a little more adventurous?



ARIES

March 21-April 20

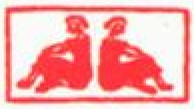
Don't get too emotional when playing arcade platform games, remember to be careful when making a jump. Rather a slow summer but the Moon will be in a fellow Earth sign by the beginning of September. You'll be at your wits' end by the end of the year.



TAURUS

April 21-May 20

A romantic, fun, sociable year is ahead of you... buy that modem now. Though you must stop hogging all the multiples in horizontally-scrolling shoot'em-ups. Wait and think it through before purchasing that joystick with revolutionary micro-switches which caught your eye in the January sales. Will it be compatible with your new console?



GEMINI

May 21-June 20

This is no time to relax. Consult an expert at your local arcade for support and guidance in these troubled times. Stay clear of low-scoring coin-ops. You really can't juggle your entire life around visits to the arcades. Stay clear of jackpot machines and dodgy-looking characters in dirty macs. A pale face reveals your hidden layer of shooting power.

really complex world – a house complete with rooms and furniture, for example – could be squeezed into under 10K. *3DCK* games can be really BIG.

VIRTUAL ACTION

Once you've defined your world and set up all the game conditions, you can then use the program's other features to generate a proper run-time module. Incentive will not be charging any royalties on games produced using the system, so there's no reason why we shouldn't see some superb 3D home brew environments on the market.

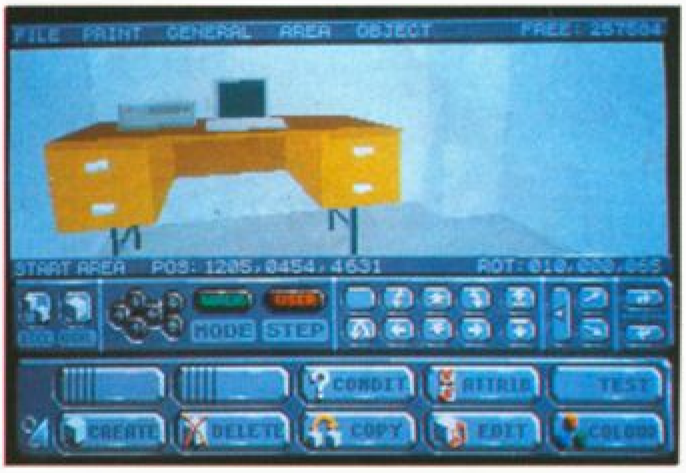
Games created using the system can be even more impressive thanks to *3DCK*'s ability to import image files (e.g. *Deluxe Paint* or *Neo-Chrome* pictures) which can be used to create a border around the window onto your 'world'. Even better, *3DCK* can create dynamic displays such as score tables and energy graphs and you can configure parts of your border as control buttons for the player to use to move around the environment, pick up objects, and so on. You could even use *3DCK* to create a (rather slow, admittedly) solid 3D flight sim game!

When it comes to sound, the program allows you to load in your own samples, as well as providing a range of default sound effects. Again, a sound can be associated with an object or an action so that, for example, shooting an object would not only generate an animated explosion sequence but also call up the appropriate sample.

Speed is not *3DCK*'s strong point and the more complex the worlds you create, the slower the program runs, but having said that it is still just as fast as many commercial 3D world games on the market. In addition, there are ways to ensure that the frame rate stays as high as possible – colouring some faces of objects as transparent, for example, so that the rendering process is speeded up.

***3DCK* is due for release in April. Prices will be £49.99 for the Amiga and PC formats, £39.99 for the ST, and £24.99 for C64, CPC and Spectrum. All 8-bit formats will be available on cassette and disk.**

The Incentive crew (clockwise from top left) boss Ian Andrew, programmers Kevin Parker and Paul Gregory and graphics designer Eugene Messina. Incentive's offices are in Aldermaston – a stone's throw from the infamous Atomic Weapons Establishment. If the button gets pressed, this lot will be the first to go!



The Amiga version of 3DCK costs a hefty £49.99, you'd better have a go on this cyberspace computer to see if you can afford it! This scene was taken from the interior of acottage designed by the programming team. Yes, you CAN open the draws and look inside!

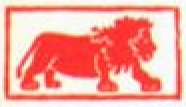
Intel is working on a set of chips that allow micros to mix television pictures, still photos, computer animation and stereo sound. The i750 video processor is one of the first multi-media chipsets and effectively shrinks Intel's DVI boards into two silicon chips.

Anco's Kick Off soccer simulation is being converted over to the Super Famicom, Nintendo Entertainment System, Sega Master System and Megadrive consoles.

CANCER

June 21-July 20

Don't be nervy or over-anxious or you'll never get a competent partner for your favourite simultaneous two-player game. Business matters will go well in between visits to computer shows. Shoot'em-ups are your love finder in December. You should soon be feeling pleased with yourself.



LEO

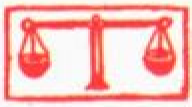
July 21-August 21

Watch the way drivers sway in racing games and be ready to overtake them at a moments notice. You have to choose whether to accept a very big opportunity. Will you enter that hi-score on the hard-disk or wait for something a little better. You're tied to the initial F, could it be an extra fuel capsule in that racing-sim.

VIRGO

August 22-September 22

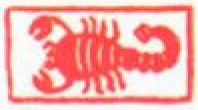
A special birthday treat is in store and you could become the star of the show. Keep your diary clear from 5th to 8th September. This is the best time to travel to Earls Court in London. The chance for excitement and bargains, the time to meet new friends and major celebrities.



LIBRA

September 23-October 22

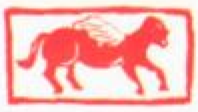
The new Moon in May leads to a calmer period is due in the middle of the year. You want to snuggle up and spend time with your favourite console or computer game. Don't let these quieter times drag you down. A collectible pod can take a lot of dark disappointment out of your life.



SCORPIO

October 23-November 22

A time for change. Could it be a Nintendo Gameboy or Super Famicom? You could even be looking after an elderly friend, possibly a C64 or Spectrum. Maybe it's easy-come, easy-go. Someone who often beats your hi-score can trigger a stretch of good luck for you. Passwords are the prize winners now.

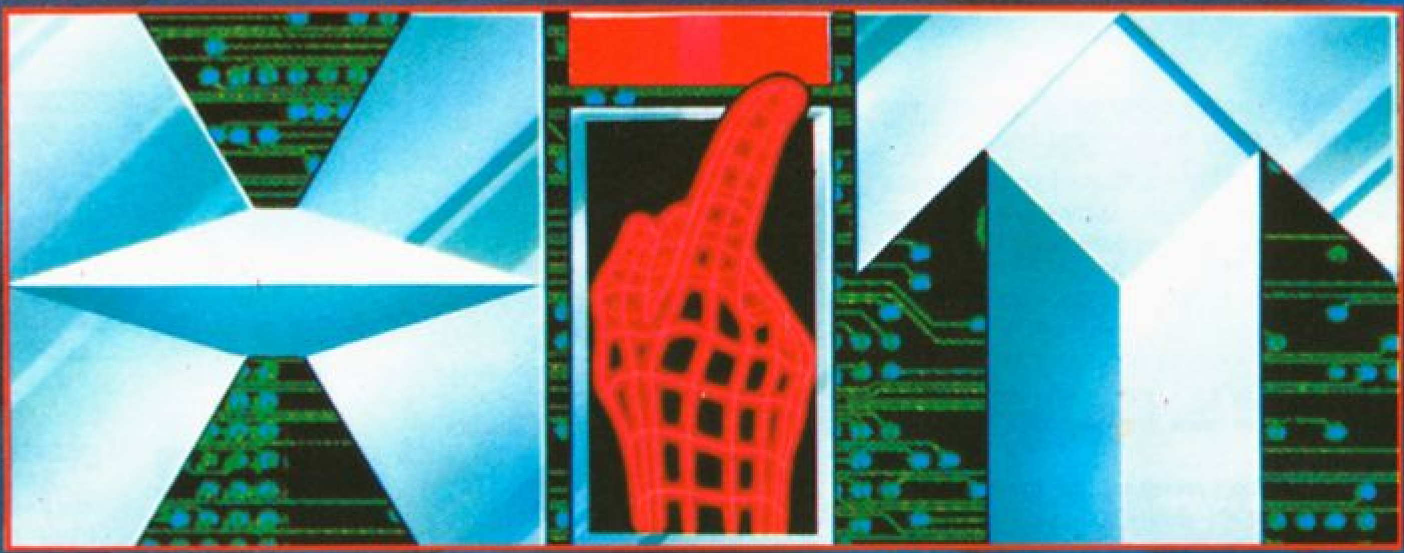


SAGITTARIUS

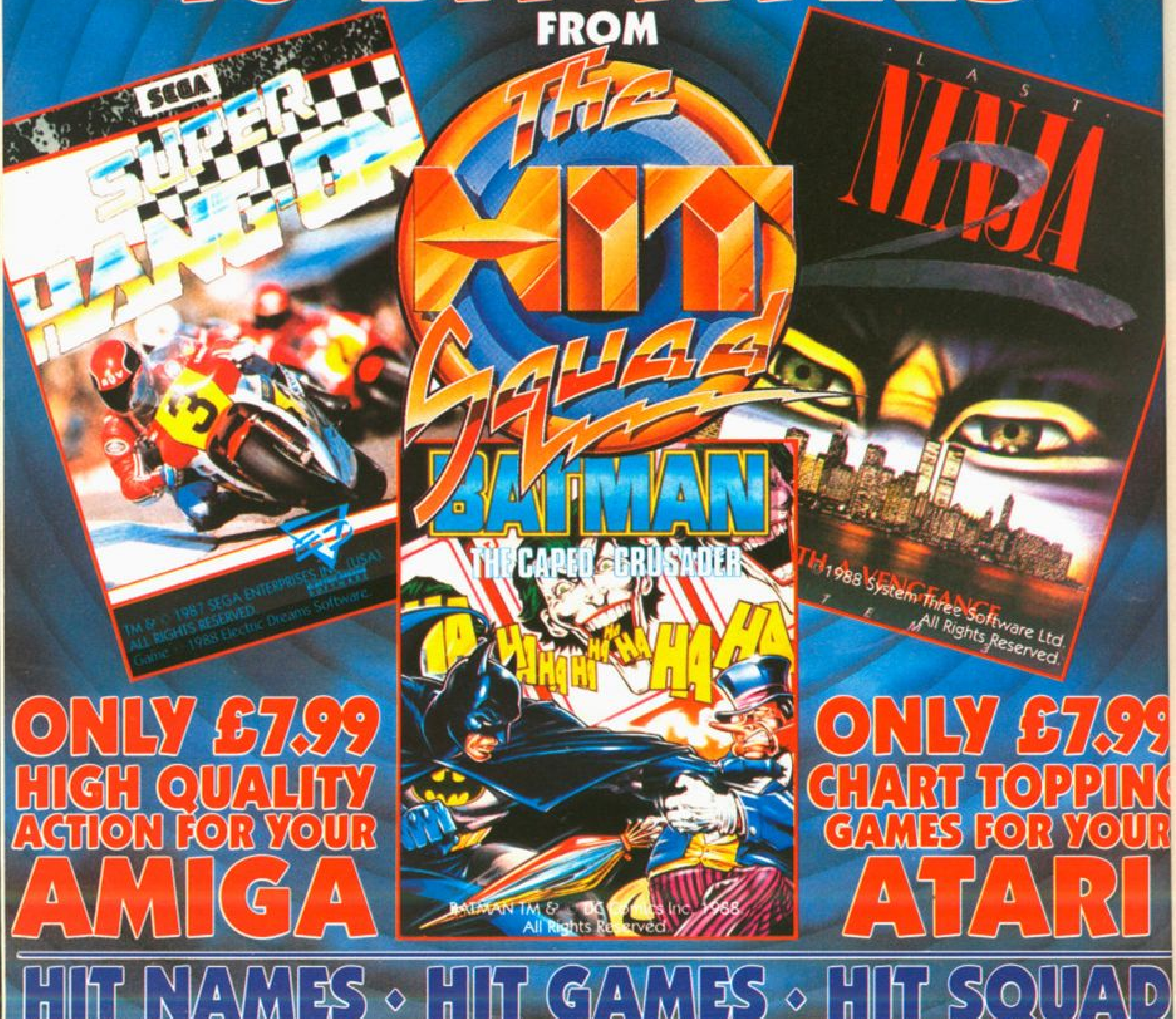
November 23-December 20

Venus is in your own sign so it's a good time to start a new party in your favourite role-playing game. August marks the start of a more honest approach, did you really find that secret level in Super Mario World? The 8th of December holds particular interest for you, it's the last '91 issue of ACE.

THE BUTTON HAS BEEN



TO LAUNCH A BRAND NEW RANGE OF
16 BIT TITLES
FROM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Letters

Midwinter scorned; Midwinter praised; grey Megadrives; the colour Game Boy rumour – ACE readers prove that the pen is mightier than the laser

IREVOLUTIONARY RPG THEORY

I have watched with interest the increasing number of people writing in to express their concerns about the current state of computer RPGs. I wholeheartedly agree with Tony Park's views on this subject. A computer game will never be a suitable replacement for a Dungeon Master.

I have this theory on what current (and foreseeable) computer RPG's are. They are...shoot-em-ups in disguise! Think for a moment what you do when you play a shoot-em-up. There are basically two things that you aim for: (1) keep playing until you have the skills necessary to complete the game and (2) amass weapons to help utilise the skills you have gained.

If you think about it, computer RPG's are practically the same! You must gain skills and attain weapons to help destroy the bad guys.

No computer game currently on the market is able to boast that it is an RPG. This, in reality, is false advertising and I think the industry should do something about it. I won't deny that I haven't played these games, I have, and I have found them enjoyable (especially *Bards Tale III* – good one, Interplay) but there are absolutely NO elements of role-playing in them.

Justin Hawkins, South Australia

For the last time, I don't think anyone is claiming that CRPG's are the same as RPG's. But CRPG's have borrowed a terminology and, to some extent, a structure from RPG's – they allow the user to create a persona with which to identify, and they confer certain statistical attributes upon that character. Furthermore, during encounters and exploration, the player has (restricted, I agree) freedom of choice as to tactics and direction. All this is a very limited borrowing, but it has to be acknowledged. A more accurate label might be 'RPG-influenced', but it's a bit of a mouthful and, frankly, CRPG's deserve to be considered in their own right and not constantly subjected to meaningless and derogatory comparisons – you yourself admit that BTIII is a 'good game'. After all, nobody (thank God) complains that shoot-em-ups are not really shoot-em-ups because the real life experience of killing other beings is entirely different. No more 'CRPG's aren't real RPGs' letters, please...

COLOUR BOY

There's a rumour going round my school to the effect that next summer the Game Boy will come out in colour. Is this true? And if so, what price will it be?

Ralph Burton, Switzerland

Despite official denials by Nintendo, industry gossip does suggest that there is a colour Game Boy either in existence or under development. Even if this is true, it is highly unlikely that it will be released before 1992 because of the continued success of the monochrome version. If such a unit were to be launched, it would probably cost less than £150.

INTERFOUL

What's happened to InterfACE, the subscribers' newsletter?? In issue 38 you promised that the newsletter was almost ready and there would be bonus editions to make up for the delay. Let us know!

Robert Phillips-Williams, Ilford

We've boobed, and we're sorry. Pre-Christmas deadlines simply made it impossible for us to complete the issues in time. They will be sent out in early January. Those whose subscriptions have expired in the last six months will also receive them as a special New Year present. InterfACE will then be a regular quarterly event for all subscribers.

GREY MEGADRIVES

I am writing with regard to the Shopwatch article in Issue 39 to express surprise that you actually considered it for inclusion, let alone printed it. Mr Longhorn is simply using scare tactics to stop himself losing business to all the so-called 'grey' importers of Megadrives. What on earth does he mean 'Think long-term: forget the imported machines'? Both official and 'grey' hardware have got equally healthy futures, the latter perhaps even more so because it will have immediate access to all the latest Japanese releases which are unlikely to hit our shores for at least 6 months if not longer and there are bound to be games released in Japan that won't see the light of day in this country EVER.

It's very narrow minded to say that an imported machine will have all the software support of a 16K Spectrum. What about the forty or so imported games that are currently available (and the list is getting larger every month)? Sega's intended release schedule of 2 games a month will put the official machines way behind the imported one's. And even if forthcoming official releases won't work on the imported machines (which is very petty on Sega's part) there are still such things as adaptors to get around that problem. It's also untrue to say that you can expect to pay more for imported games – in reality (apart from the large data games like Strider and Phantasy Star II) all them come in at little more than £30.00 apiece.

So please, give it a little more thought before you agree to print articles containing this kind of subject matter. If things go on in this fashion, the general public will just say 'Right! That's it! I'm not going to buy any consoles from anyone.' which really

will be bad news for everybody concerned.
Julian Roche, Altrincham

First, as regards Dirk's article, his views are his own and not necessarily those of the Editorial team – this should have been made clear at the end of his article (it was in the original copy) but was left out by mistake. We agree that, when official distribution policy results in a lessening of choice for the consumer, as it does here, then there's something seriously wrong. Furthermore, there is absolutely no confirmation of the rumour (quoted by Dirk Longhorn) that future official Megadrive software will be purpose-written for UK machines and therefore incompatible with grey imported models. Finally, who is selling these grey imports anyway? Sega, of course. No-one else, to our knowledge, manufactures Megadrives and sells them on the cheap in Japan, from which marketplace consumers are perfectly at liberty to buy them if they so choose.

DOUBLE DISK DEALING

A plea to all software producers writing for double-sided ST's: check it works on single-sided machines with a second double-sided drive! The list of offenders is long and includes companies who ought to know better (Rainbow Arts, Lucasfilms, I could go on...). Please remember that 2nd drives DO NOT BOOT.
Name Witheld

(Please note that witholding names sometimes means that we will not publish your letter. If you've got a point of view, have the courage to put your name to it...)

SAVE OUR SCORES

I would like to know why some games have a saveable high score table and others don't? A saveable high score increases long term interest – even games like Double Dragon, which are easy to complete and therefore short on life expectancy, pull you back for just one more go to see if you can better your score.
Alastair Murray, Edinburgh

THICK CITY

Yes, I think a lot of games are thick. The new game features I would like to see in future games are:-

1. More intelligent installation procedures. On installation, most games should be able to diagnose what type of PC you're installing it on and what options (eg VGA or EGA) for screens, hard disk drives etc it has available to pick from. These installation programs should be much more friendly and idiot proof.
2. This copy protection method of needing the original disk in your dirve to invoke the game is very bad programming, design, and PR. Most games should have an individual number (and maybe buyer's name put in during installation) to make each copy unique and hence easier to track software pirates.
3. Games should allow you to print out information (like character status in RPG games) to make interaction with other players more fun. Players could also interact with the game makers by faxing status reports to get help or win prizes.
4. More games should have built-in help oracles. These would give you on-line help which could be

PRIZE LETTER
PRIZE LETTER

PC ENGINES, PLEASE

With regard to Douglas Innes' letter last month concerning the Sega Megadrive, I do not share his pessimism on the future of the machine, but I do disagree with ACE in choosing it as the best console to buy.

As we all know, Japan leads the way in the console market and it is therefore interesting to see that the most popular machine in Japan is not the Megadrive but the PC Engine. Of course this machine has been around longer and has consequently generated more software than the Sega, but the main reason for the poor demand for the Megadrive is that it is not seen as a vast improvement over the Engine and so far there have been far too many mediocre releases for it. Another reason is that all Japanese games freaks are eagerly awaiting the release of the Nintendo Super Famicon which should clean up, if Game Boy's success is anything to go by.

You may say so what? And who cares about what is popular in Japan? But if a machine doesn't succeed there then it is unlikely to get progressive development from the top developers and software won't vastly improve. I personally think the Megadrive is a great machine, but it is overpriced by Virgin/Sega (it sells at around £100 in Japan and you can get them from Hong Kong for around £65).

Of course, what you get is a guaranteed, properly configured machine and, wait for it...a machine that isn't compatible with grey imports! It seems wise to stick to the grey market and get all the latest software from Japan directly and often cheaper than Virgin plan to sell them for anyway. I do realise that many purchasers will want an official machine with English instructions with the games, but don't brainwash everyone by over-hyping a machine which, to date, only has a couple of really playable fun games.

I advise people looking for a console to check out the PC Engine simply because it has better developers, better licenses, and better software (exactly what the Game Boy has over the Lynx). Take a look at recent releases such as *Devil Crash Pinball*, *Formation Soccer* (best multiplayer soccer game) and *Don Doko Don*. And then all the rest such as *Ultimate Tiger*, *Bloody Wolf*, and the superlative *Tennis* (I must say, however, forget *Gunhed* – it's ridiculously overrated).

Incidentally, one problem PC Engines and Megadrives have is the perennial PAL/SCART configuration of grey imports. PAL machines run slower than SCART and have a boxed-in display on screen. It is always worth getting SCART (provided you've got a SCART monitor or TV – and watch out for SCART machines runing at PAL speed – on old PC Engines). Unfortunately, the SCART PC Engine usually needs a separate colour booster because the colours are very dark.

I'm not trying to start the dreaded rivalry that haunts the ST and Amiga – I just think that your portrayal of the console scene is one-sided and ignorant.
Jason Brookes, Cheshire

PS This would have been typed but I sold my Amiga to buy an Engine and CD ROM drive – you're right, you DO need both a console and a computer!

ACE's coverage of the PC Engine has recently been increased with the addition of the monthly PC Engine column in the Pink Pages. We'll also be increasing our coverage of new PCE titles in the New Year. At the end of the day, we still support the Megadrive – but we support individual choice even more. The Megadrive was our individual choice because the official launch and vast UK publicity spend over the next few months should ensure a good user base for the machine and the larger the user base, the more active the market becomes.

bought for points.

5. Game packaging shold be more inventive. Instead of cardboard boxes why not sell games in/as false hardback novels? Other ideas would be to include mapping sheets and note paper with the game logo on it or game stickers etc.

6. Game upgrades. Certain games need to be upgraded every so often - games like F19 Stealth Fighter for instance, which needs a new scenario upgrade for the invasion of Kuwait! When games come out the makers should support them more, listen to user feedback, and then re-release them with all the new features. To get the upgrades at reduced cost, all people should have to do is send in the original master disk to prove previous purchase.

7. Networks. Why are games not coming out in network versions? Novell and numerous other networking systems are becoming so common and some games would be ideal on a network. A Dungeons and Dragons game with numerous opponents, or a war or flight simulator with human opponents would greatly add to the diversity and fun.

Michael Byrne, Cork

Absolutely, although some of your points are more applicable to PCs. As yours and other letters this month demonstrate, it's often the little touches in programming that matter..

New Year, New Rating

ACE is blazing a new trail into 1991 with a completely new award for the hottest games. As you know, we've been awarding ACE Rated nominations to 900+ games since the early days, but we've now decided to create a special award to make it clear WHY those games particularly appeal to ACE readers. A 900+ game is setting new standards for advanced computer entertainment – hence the new award, the ACE Trailblazer...for games that take you into new dimensions of gameplay.

MIDWINTER RIGHTLY RATED...

I would like to publicly congratulate Mike Singleton and Rainbird on producing one of the best games I have ever played. I would recommend Midwinter to anyone with an ST or Amiga, even though a friend and I did manage to complete it quite quickly. We chose the easiest method of completion by not making a large team. However, we still return to the game just to watch the graphic sequences: especially the cable car entering a station.

Paul Garrish

USE THAT RAM

I own an Amiga A500 and some months ago purchased an A501 RAM pack. For practical purposes, the additional memory allows me greater freedom and range, but it is hardly ever taken advantage of by the vast majority of software titles that I own. For example, in *Xenon II*, a reload is required whenever you enter the shop, and the soundtrack during play has fewer samples (not just because one channel is used for sound effects). Similarly, *Shadow of the Beast* is interrupted at intervals for additional data to be loaded.

Anthony Grech, Southampton

INSTANT SUNSHINE

Defeating General Masters is simple: hang-glide. The only person you need is Stark and the only equipment you require is a box of dynamite.

Start the game (preferably as far South as possible), then take Stark to the nearest weapons dump and collect some dynamite. Then take him to a cable car station that goes up a high mountain. When at the top, set off on the hang glider along the mountain ridges. Use the map screen to plan your route and simply travel along the ridges towards the corner of the island where Masters has his base.

It's quite easy (practise makes perfect) to hang glide all the way to the base even with spotter planes and mortars. If you crash or are shot down, just ski to a new cable car station and carry on. All that remains for you is to plant the dynamite and blow Masters sky high.

William Hodgkinson, Bloxham

Reminds me of cracking Lords of Midnight by taking Morkin on his own up the Eastern side of the map – but that was rather more difficult. I admit it's pretty easy to crack Midwinter once you know how, but how long did it take you to work this out? Or did you stumble on this solution by luck?

MIDWINTER WRONGLY

I am announcing the start of a long needed campaigh...to get all companies that supply us with games, serious programs, or whatever, to put the bloody labels the correct way up!

As all mentally competent people will tell you, a label is the *right* way up you can read it with the sliding protective cover *downwards*. Anything else simply isn't kosher.

That's because when you sit (b) down in your cosy little disk box, and then return later to give the little blighter some exercise, you don't know who or where it is, because all the labels are upside down.

And next, a complaint. How can Midwinter possibly deserve 948? It deserves no more than 800.

The strategy in Midwinter amounts to no more than deciding whether to get Davy Hart, an 11 year old pimply brat, still at school (or at least he should be) to cross, ALL ALONE, the equivalent of the Himalayas armed only with a set of skis and a peanut butter sandwich...

948 for a game that lets you see snow, through 32 people's eyes...

948 for a game that, after slogging to get 26 people in my team (although as any honest gamer will tell you, the maximum number of people that can be moved in any one turn, without nodding off, is 6) and finally defeating the enemy, I managed to win the game with Stark on his own in a matter of a few turns.

948 for a game where the residents – all 32 of them – are as thick as Neil Kinnock. I had one character stay in a settlement to protect the heatmine, as an enemy unit were nearby, and while going from the garage to the house to get some food, he totally failed to notice 30 enemy vehicles attack and capture the settlement.

I will admit that the game tried to be a step in the right direction, but Maelstrom must have tied it to the left shoe of a member of the ministry for silly walks. Come on ACE, pull your finger out. Let's not get engrossed with all the hype and backhanders, let's be objective when rating – you're giving far too many games ACE RATED status.

But most importantly, let's continue this campaign to get all the labels put the right way up!

Paul Kerslake, Swansea

The ACE rated status is now changing over to ACE Trailblazer (see elsewhere on these pages) and one result of this will be that games will have to be even hotter to win this new coveted award.

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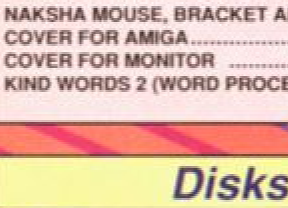

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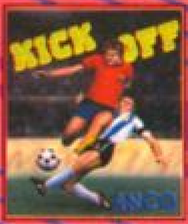

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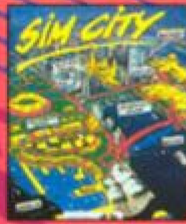

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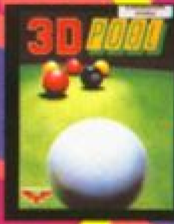

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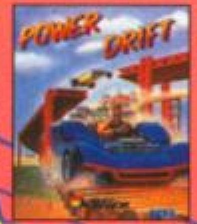

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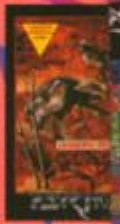

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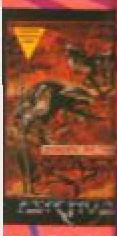

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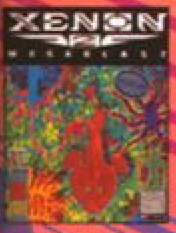

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Amiga Format said: "An excellent adventure... witty, cunning and just plain good fun! If you liked Fish! you'll probably like this, because they're very similar in style: you may even prefer *Myth*, it's that good!"

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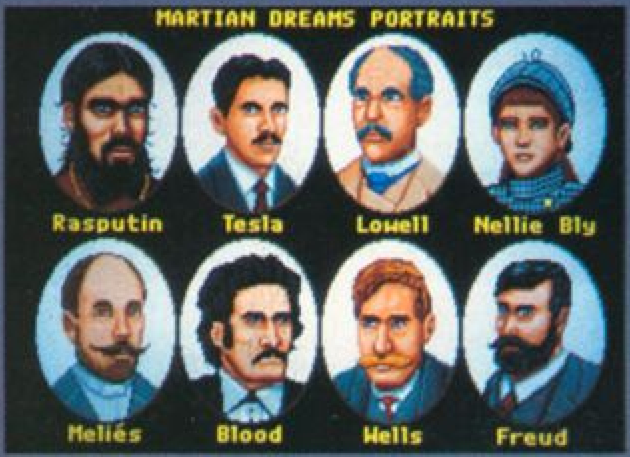


You don't get that many games with the likes of Freud, Rasputin and HG Wells included.

Last year could be thought of as the best yet for fantasy role-playing games. First there was *Ultima VI* with its improved icon interface and wonderful graphics and sound. Then came *Savage Empire*, the premier for a new series of games based around the *Ultima VI* gaming system. Every *Worlds of Ultima* release has its own unique story plot and characters. Both games were an ACE-Rated step ahead of the rest.

With two *Ultima* titles and Chris Roberts' outstanding *Wing Commander*, Origin was on a roll. Many believe this Texas-based company to be the software house of 1990. Now Origin is working on *Martian Dreams*, the next *Worlds of Ultima* game. So will 1991 be an even better time for fantasy role-playing fans?

MOVE OVER CYBERPUNK

Martian Dreams has possibly the most exciting and imaginative scenario ever devised for a game. It mixes Victorian personalities and Jules Verne technology in a fusion of fact and fiction which Origin laughingly dubs Steampunk.

The producer of *Martian Dreams*, Warren Spector, is in charge of around 25 game designers, artists, musicians, sound effects specialists, testers, writers and programmers working on this ambitious project. Spector is one of the most experienced role-playing game designers and writers in America. Before joining Origin, he worked for Steve Jackson Games and TSR, the company responsible for the *Dungeons & Dragons* series of products. "I'm head whip-cracker," says Spector as he leans back in the most comfortable chair in the building.

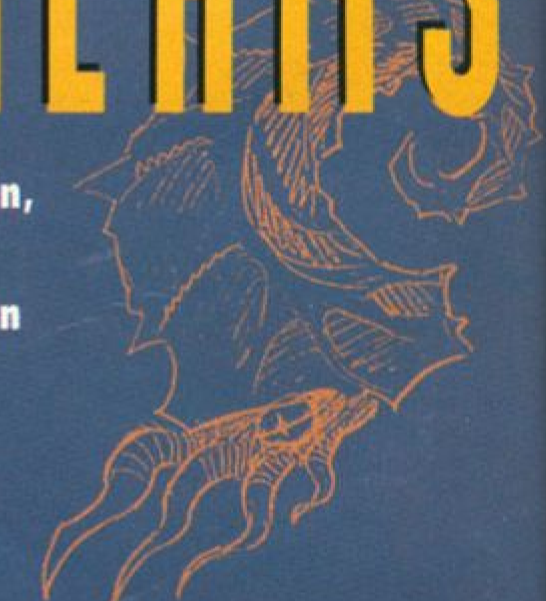
Warren Spector and Jeff George, *Martian Dreams'* Project Leader, were still ironing the creases out of the game's plot during my visit to Origin's 16000 square foot air-conditioned building in Austin, the state capital of Texas.

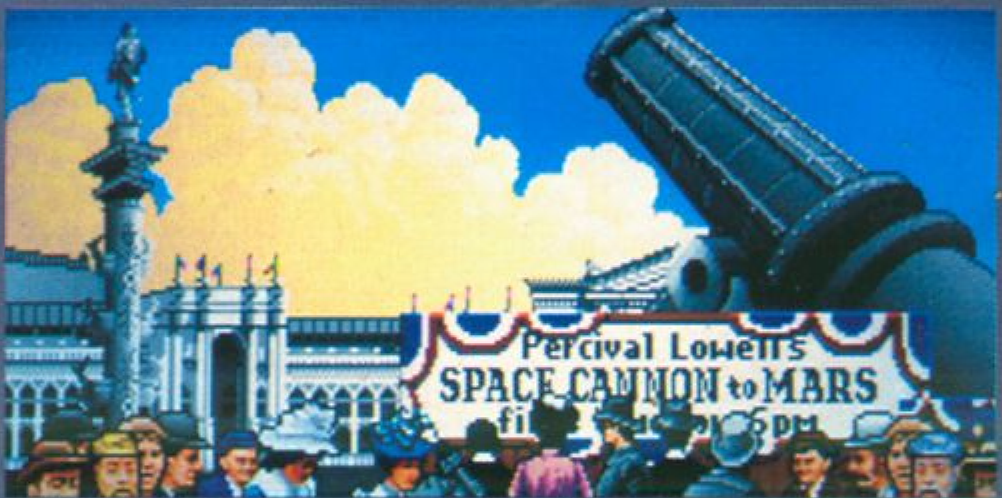
WAR OF THE WORLDS

"You travel back in time to the 1890's and then to Mars, where you interact with real, historical figures, uncover the secrets of an extinct Martian race, struggle with Victorian technology, gain psionic abilities, defeat Id

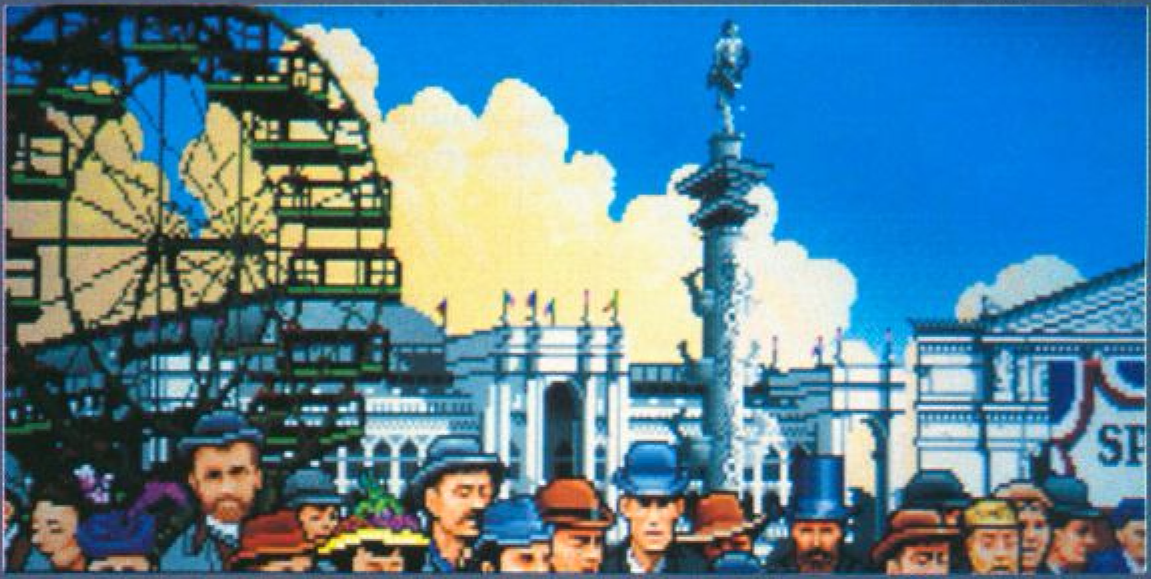
MARTIAN DREAMS

Why are Grigori Rasputin, H.G Wells and Sigmund Freud going on a mission to Mars? Rik Haynes steps back in time to preview the next World of Ultima...





Part of the excellent animated intro-sequence at the beginning of the game.


This computer generated crowd incorporates people from the real Chicago exhibition back in 1893!

creatures generated by a dream machine, and rescue a lost Mars expedition," says Jeff George in his early design proposal for *Martian Dreams*. It seems a Mars a Day helps you work, rest and play with dream machine Id beings!

The story so far. In 1893, Nikola Tesla - America's most brilliant eccentric genius - is instructed to build a space cannon near Chicago. The launch to Mars is scheduled to take place in conjunction with Chicago's World Exhibition to be held later that year. The show did actually take place in real-life, minus the space cannon of course! Back to the plot. While a wide variety of dignitaries from the time go on a tour of the capsule during a gala celebration, the cannon is accidentally fired and a group of scientists, captains of industry, entertainers and politicians are prematurely hurled to Mars. Except the launch was no accident. The power-hungry and vision-driven Grigori Rasputin arranged the untimely launch of the capsule with himself on-board.

Fortunately the newly-arrived Martians can, at least in theory, construct a ship to return to Earth. After a brief period of panic, the travellers settle down to the business of exploring their new environment and establishing a settlement on Mars. Their progress is relayed to Earth via giant signalling mirrors.

All goes well for the first few months, with reports of many wonders found in the Martian cities and the discovery of a Dream Machine which allows a person to enter the realm of dreams while fully awake. You emerge with complete memories of your dream experiences. But messages start to report of sickness and insanity among the humans on the planet. Finally, after six months, all communication with Mars suddenly stops. It's now up to you to lead a rescue mission and save the first Mars expedition...

WORLDS UP

Martian Dreams is basically a game filled with moral dilemmas like many of the *Ultima* adventures before it. "You, like all humans, must confront and control the evil in yourself," explains Jeff George. "This evil is represented in the game by the Id creatures released by the Dream Machine."

But the buck doesn't stop with the Id creatures. "Technology used and abused without the benefits of caution, wisdom and understanding, leads to disaster." Do I see shades of green appearing in this game? But the Id creatures do have a lot to answer for. "The use of the mind-altering escapist devices for empty pleasure is ultimately self-destructive." Jeff George adds, "On many levels, the Martian Dream Machine is metaphoric for the recreational pharmaceuticals in our own world." Trip on this, I think he means illegal drugs. Origin may even incorporate a Just-Say-No message in the game.

You just don't get this level of complexity in the average shoot'em-up do you? And I haven't even mentioned the Plantimal creatures, human survivalists, oxygum for breathing in the thin Martian atmosphere, Rasputin's insane scheming or the Martian's plans to invade the Earth!

The imaginative story, complex gameplot, advanced character interaction, rich personalities, and extraordinary Victorian visuals make *Martian Dreams* one of the ACE team's most eagerly-awaited games for 1991. The game is initially being developed on PC format, though Super Famicom, Amiga, PC CD-ROM and CDTV adaptions are also likely. *Martian Dreams* should be finished before the autumn, ACE will be bringing you more exclusive reports on the game's progress over the coming months.

"I'm head whip-cracker!"

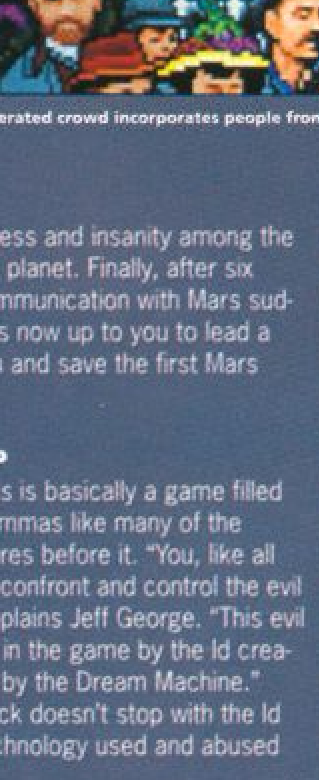
Warren Spector, producer of *Martian Dreams*

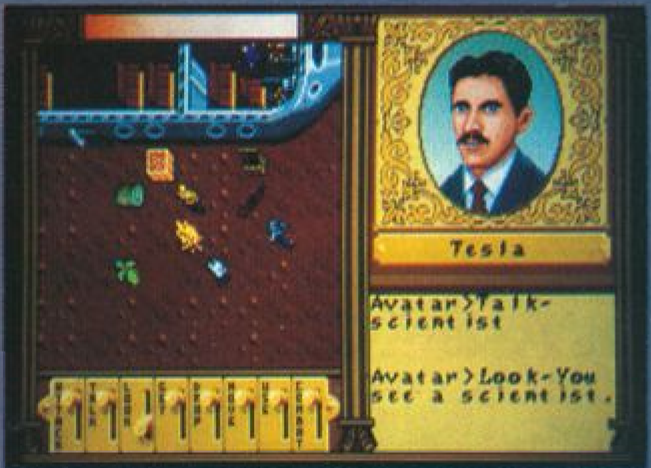
"We want to scare people with invisible monsters. You won't know where your enemy is."

Jeff George, *Martian Dreams'* Project Leader

ORIGIN'S ORIGINS

Origin was founded in 1983 by a team of four – the brothers Robert and Richard Garriott, their friend and software author Charles Bueche and their father and ex-NASA astronaut Owen Garriott. The company is situated off the Wild Basin Road in North-West Austin, Texas. Origin directly employs 55 people and has, in the last seven years, invested over 10 million dollars in the development of new products, computer hardware, cross development systems and support equipment. This leading American games developer has produced 20 titles for all the major home computer formats including PC, C64, Apple II, Macintosh, Amiga and ST. Until last year, Origin's most famous products were Richard Garriott's immensely popular series of Ultima fantasy role-playing games. These have now been joined by *Wing Commander* (currently the best selling game in the States) and *Worlds of Ultima*. Through association with Japanese Nintendo developers and publishers, Origin has converted some of its titles onto Nintendo consoles. Additionally, Origin is itself developing Ultima products for the Nintendo Entertainment System and Gameboy. Origin is also looking towards the future with exciting new games and adaptions being planned for Nintendo's Super Famicom 16-bit console and various Compact Disc entertainment platforms. This isn't bad going when you consider that ten years ago Richard Garriott was selling his first game, *Akalabeth*, in a plastic bag with photocopied instructions!


Meet Lord British – alias Richard Garriott – in casual dress. Nice pony-tail, eh?



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Avatar>Talk-scientist

Avatar>Look-You see a scientist.
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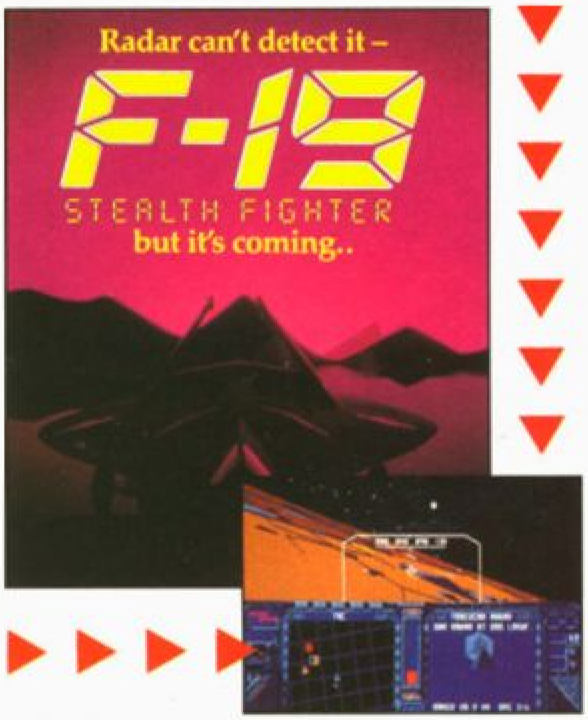


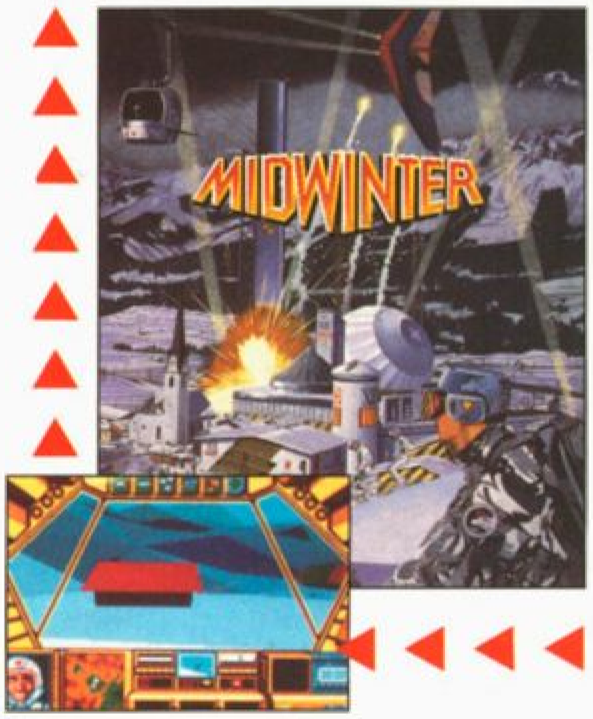
F-19 Stealth Fighter is the 'plane they can't keep under wraps. It has soared to the top of the Gallup charts, receiving review rating after review rating above 90 %.

"Fast smooth and technically sophisticated. The four mission territories, cold war, conventional and limited war situations plus the selection of available options translate into a huge number of different missions - each with its own level of enemies, radar installations and alerted bases to face. Flying a successful operation draws on a variety of different skills - radar negotiation, bombing accuracy, air-to-air improvisation and plane handling skills. Presentation, right down to the expansive manual, is impeccable throughout. For strategic depth and variety of gameplay, there's very little to touch it." **The One** July 90

FREE T SHIRT OR MUG WITH THESE GAMES

Midwinter earned its title as "Strategy Game of the Decade" by freezing out the opposition to head the Gallup charts and by receiving accolade after accolade from the Press.

"Many games are billed as 'revolutionary', but Midwinter is probably the closest you are going to get to the title. Whilst the presentation is superb, it is the superb gameplay that sets it apart from other 'classics'. Although your task is to destroy the evil General Masters, the gameplay allows you to perform the task in whatever manner you deem appropriate. As you put together a strong team with varying skills that actually have a bearing on the game, any method can be used to kill Masters. Couple this with four modes of transport, numerous missions, and an involving storyline, you have a game that really does live up to its classification." **ST Action** May 90



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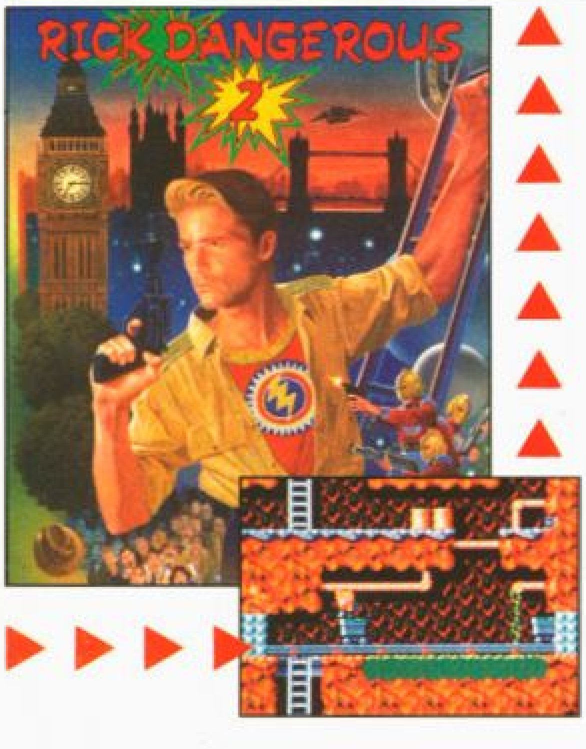

Rick Dangerous II charts the return of everyone's favourite hero, back in a flash to fight the Fat Man and find favour with fun lovers everywhere.

"By now, Rick Dangerous has earned its place in the hall of fame for classic platform games, but just when everyone was taking it for granted, along comes the sequel - and its even better than the original. The graphics have been polished up, the sound effects are funnier and the gameplay is more fluid and enjoyable. With a little thought all the puzzles can be worked out (and some of the solutions are very strange!). Even if you haven't played the original game (where have you been ?) Rick Dangerous II is well worth a generous slab of any game-player's time. But a generous slab could have you sitting in front of your computer for days without rest. You have been warned....but buy it anyway." **Amiga Format** Nov 90

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EPIC

Look out *Wing Commander*! DIGITAL IMAGE DESIGN and OCEAN are preparing to launch a space-sim packing 400 polygons per second, enormous space battles and over 70 different types of spacecraft. Rik Haynes walks 'round the hangar-bay for a preview...

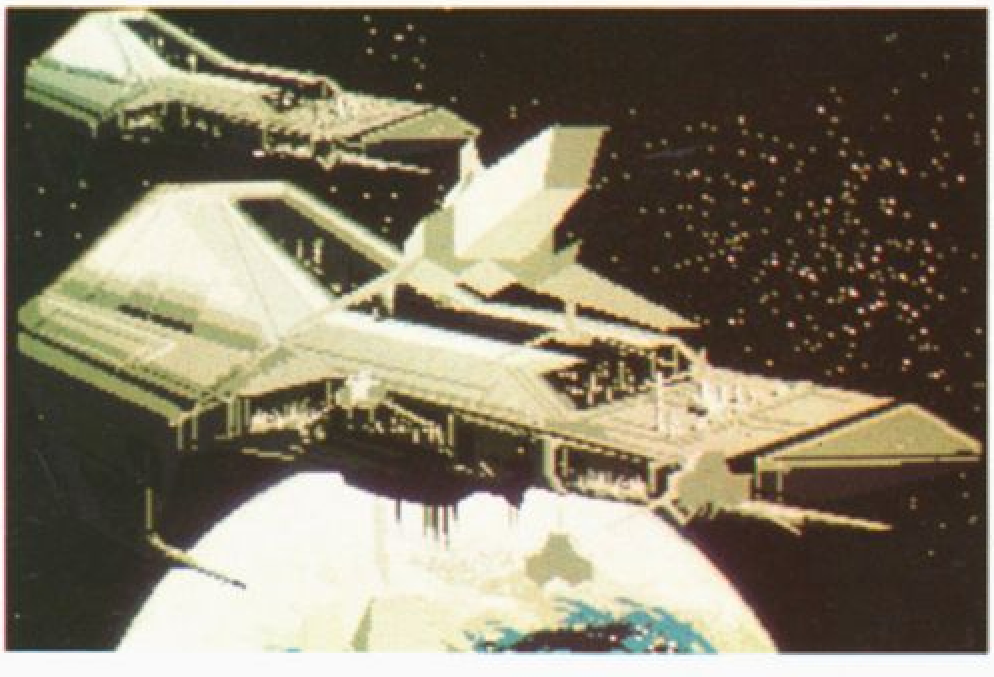
Nothing ever goes as originally planned. *Epic* started back in February 1989 when Microdeal wanted a three-dimensional version of *Goldrunner*. The talented trio of Martin Kenwright, Phil Allsopp and Russ Payne were eager to oblige the Cornwall-based company – forming Digital Image Design to handle the job. But it's never that easy. Microdeal suddenly pulled out of the games industry. Digital Image Design had the rights to the game and looked for another publisher.

The original concept was revamped. Ocean, on the look out for high-quality original product, quickly snapped it up. *Goldrunner 3D* became *Epic*. Meanwhile, Digital Image Design desperately needed cash and Ocean wanted a flight-sim. The award-winning *F-29 Retaliator* resulted. Finally, Digital Image Design had the chance to write *Epic*.

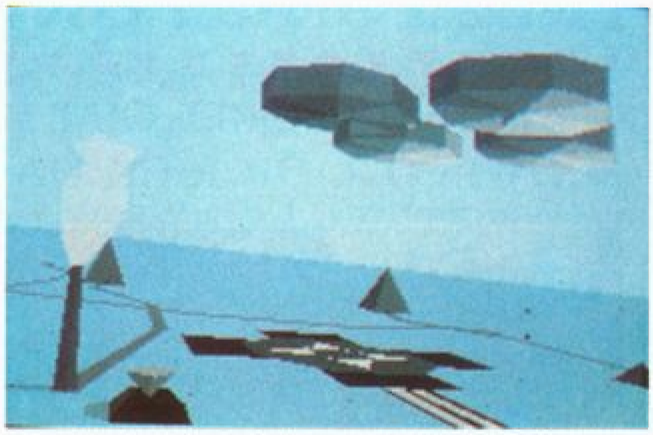
EIGHT GAMES IN ONE

So it begins. The human race is on the verge of extinction. There's going to be a supernova, the entire star system is going to be destroyed. The humans want to escape to safety in the next solar system. Unfortunately, this will be seen as an act of war by the ruling Rexxon Empire next door.

Like *Battlestar Galactica* (a sci-fi movie come TV series), the human fleet masses for the flight to survival. Only the spaceships in *Epic* have been specially constructed for the trip. The busy human survivalists have built two massive motherships and a unique ship to protect the fleet called the Epic starfighter. Basically the game is a breakout of 60 million people across 50 light years of enemy territory... and you're in-charge of kicking Rexxon butt in an Epic fighter. Your fleet consists of agriculture ships, civilian transports, fuel tankers, ordnance carriers, freighters, etc. Each ship plays a vital role in the game.



Patrol duty. An Epic starfighter pulls away from its home carrier as the off-duty ships come home for some well-earned R&R.



More action, planetside. Two bulky transporters head in to land at a ground base.

THE TRAILS OF SPACE FLIGHT

How you fly in space was an important question for Digital Image Design. Should they go for an *Elite*-style rocket-thruster craft or an *F-29* in space? "We've just abandoned everything," says Martin Kenwright. "We created a starfighter that scrolls beautifully and has nice inertia. You bank and your ship sways. You've got rocket boosters to throw you out of an area, space brakes which really slam in and a hair-pin turn – your craft can effectively spin round on the spot."

"We're trying to run a movie-inspired game," says Martin Kenwright at Digital Image Design. "We looked at the classic *Star Wars* films and saw their technical realisation – the superb objects, effects and feeling of movement through space. We want to try and create a reality. We're trying to be the first believable flight-sim in space. Only it's not just space, it's five planets as well. *Epic* is eight separate games rolled into one."

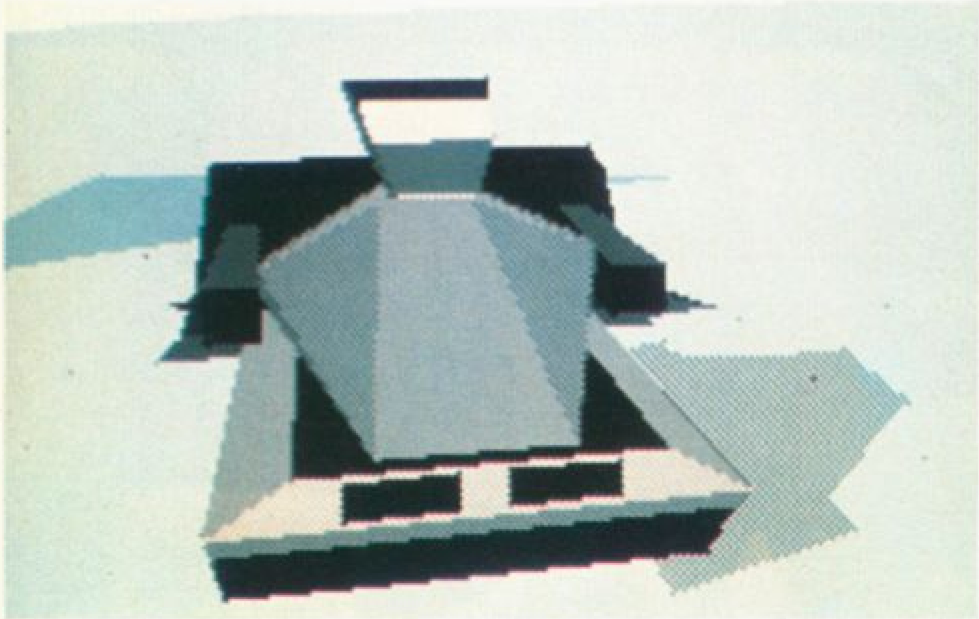
During the game you get the chance to visit a variety of planets with with their own atmosphere and surface objects. Each planet has proper terrain with mountains, craters, volcanoes with surface objects including monorail and motorway networks, alien cites. Some objects are animated, such as the rotating gun batteries and massive battle tanks which move around the planets surface firing multi-missiles and launching fighters.

BREAKING THE BARRIERS

Digital Image Design has created over 10Mb of graphics data for its latest release... hardly surprisingly when you consider *Epic* is filled with movie-like animated sequences throughout the game. "We've got a big glossy intro with some nice titling screens using bitmap graphics, hand-drawn screens, sprites, animated backdrops and vector graphics overlaid on-top," Kenwright confirms. "We call these Introgens, created with our custom-made design editor. Hopefully these sequences will bring the game to life. We can take proper *DPaint* panoramic backdrops, scroll and fully animate them (stars twinkling, lights turning on and off, blast doors opening and closing, moving cars or Monorail systems, etc), add text and simultaneously draw over a dozen moving 3D objects."

Digital Image Design's graphics engine has some of the fastest 3D routines ever seen in an Amiga or ST game – with an average of 400 polygons per second. A good example is your Epic fighter with approximately 120 points, a similar number of polygons, and on average it goes 14-16 frames a second on the Amiga (it's slightly faster on the ST). Some preliminary groundwork on the PC is running at an amazing 50 frames. "Our 3D is the biz," proclaims Kenwright.

In addition to the usual supply of polygon triangles and rectangles, *Epic* has got discs, spheres and different kinds



As you can see from this shot of one of the ground vehicles, the level of polygon-generated detail is incredible - and as for the speed...!

of hashing effects like see-through objects. "Spheres are dead easy to do, you just draw a blob on the screen, but discs are very complex in 3D," explains Kenwright. "Although anybody can buy a textbook and find out how to do it, the difficulty is getting it down to run as fast as possible."

This brand-new code is the thing that's caused delays. "You can't just sit back with your 3D engine, you always have to do better in your next game - it's what people expect. Gameplayers get bored very quickly," Kenwright offers. Digital Image Design has been experimenting with texture mapping producing some bark and water effects on the PC. "It's just a case of priorities. First, we want fractal landscapes to fly over like you saw in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn*. It may sound ludicrous now but it's not far off." The process of writing a 3D game is unbelievably time-consuming. It takes Digital Image Design three to four days to design each three dimensional shape used in the game. "Our shapes take three or four times longer to produce because our system is so complex - it's optimised for speed, not ease of use," Kenwright sighs.

Russ Payne, Phil Allsopp and Andy Torkington are programming *Epic*. Martin Kenwright is in charge of concept and design. Paul Hollywood and a few other people are providing additional design. David Whittaker has developed the music and sound FX, including some sampled speech and neat warp drive spot-effects.

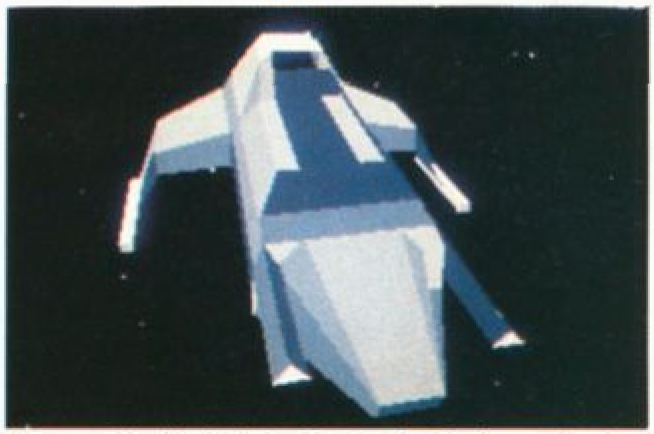
Epic is the first game where bitmap and polygon graphics have been so successfully combined. Kenwright is amazed no-one has tried this technique before. The ST and Amiga versions of *Epic* should be ready for release by the beginning of spring, the PC adaption will follow later in the year. *Epic* is huge, incorporating nearly every type of space warfare imaginable – from individual strikes to massive battles between over a thousand spaceships. It takes you four hours to fly across a world – going at full speed – because Digital Image Design use full 32-bit 3D. The game is never the same from the end of mission one. It can branch to completely opposite scenarios – with "Meanwhile..." movie sequences keeping you updated on the appropriate story. With the Rexxon's in hot pursuit, your race for survival could take 30 years!

"3D games are a fine balance. If you put in too much definition the game starts chugging and it becomes unplayable. Epic is just full of action."

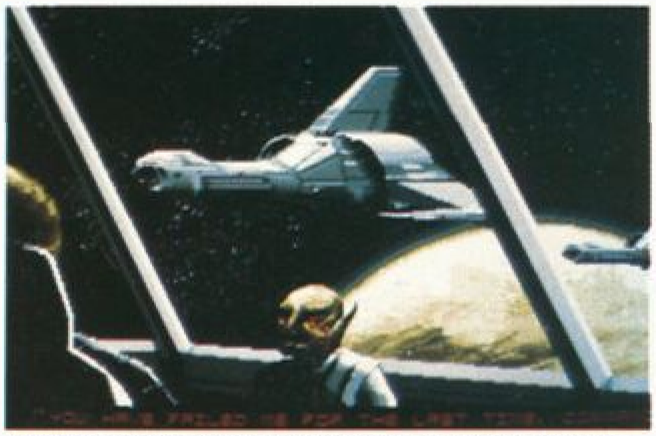
Martin Kenwright

TAKE THE KENWRIGHT CHALLENGE

Martin Kenwright is sick of hearing every games developer say they've got the fastest three-dimensional routines. "If anybody out there thinks they've got the fastest 3D, get in touch with me. We'll get together in a room, each of us can slap a thousand pounds down on the table, and we'll see who's the fastest," smirks the confident Kenwright.

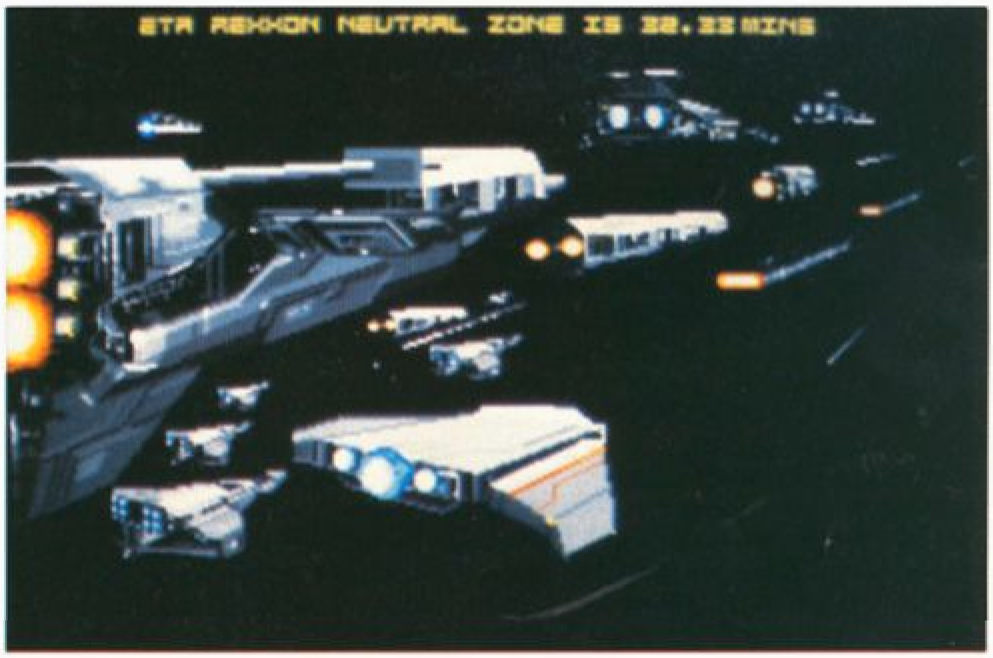


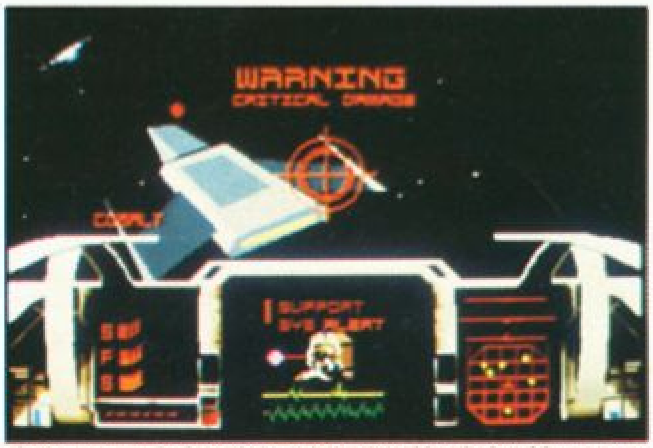
Yummy graphics - big, detailed and fast! Just the ticket for a top 3D polygon-generated game!



"Darth Vader!" shouts the smaller alien, excitedly. The aliens are playing "Guess the quote" aboard their base ship.

The fleet of homeless humans approaches the neutral buffer zone between the Terran and Rexxon systems. Be warned - the Rexxons don't want you on their patch!





The Rexxon scum is almost in your sights. Wrenching the joystick you try to bring the ship around so that you can lock on to the alien target.

"A very good space game though you never go near a planet and it never uses vector graphics. It's a great game for people with three thousand pound machines. Epic is for the masses."

Martin Kenwright on *Wing Commander*

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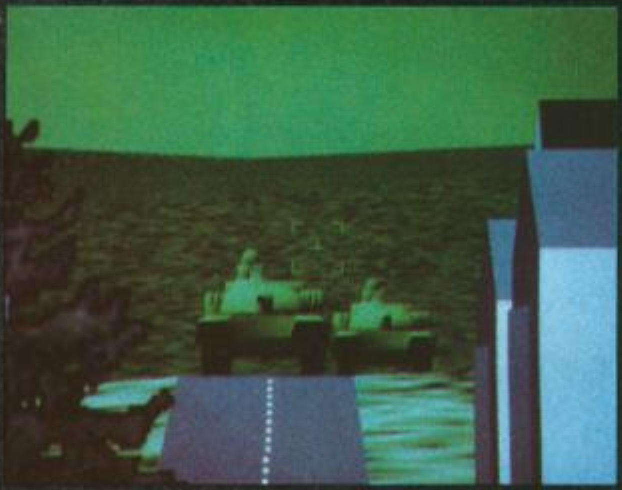


Almost there! A little to the lower left and I'll let them have it!

WAR GAMES

Today the British Army uses military simulations to train its tank crews, tomorrow you could be playing them in your local arcades. Rik Haynes goes on reconnaissance in GEC-Marconi's sim-labs in Scotland...

Sweat pours down the back of my spine as I survey the surrounding battlefield. Out of the shadows, three Russian T-80 main battle tanks trundle towards me in classic formation. Pressing hard on the right joystick fire button, I line-up my first target. The cross-hair locks-on to my unsuspecting victim. A flick of a switch and crucial laser range-finder data fades onto my HUD display. I confirm my shot and the turret elevates, automatically taking care of the ballistics. A smooth feel of the trigger and away we go.

Perfect hit - a pile of useless Russian metal stands dead in its tangled tracks. A cloud of smoke drifts up, the spirit of a Soviet tank crew now free to roam the countryside. The remaining T-80s break formation and start their witch hunt. Quickly swinging my turret to the left, I foolishly overshoot the next T-80 turkey. Priceless seconds are lost as the Russians release two rounds, screaming towards me at supersonic speeds.

The first falls short, pounding the ground in front of my tank into a white-hot fusion of earth and metal. A nanosecond later the second shell lands. More accurate than its predecessor, it wipes out a multi-million British Challenger 2 tank. Crew survival is rated at only 23%. Game Over. My first attempt at 'playing' GEC-Marconi's new tank-gunnery simulation produced mixed results. If only I had some multiple pulse blasters or a smart bomb!

Tanks, Planes and Arcade Games

Eat your hearts out, *Battlezone* fans, because GEC-Marconi is developing a tank gunnery simulation for the British Army superior to anything yet played in the

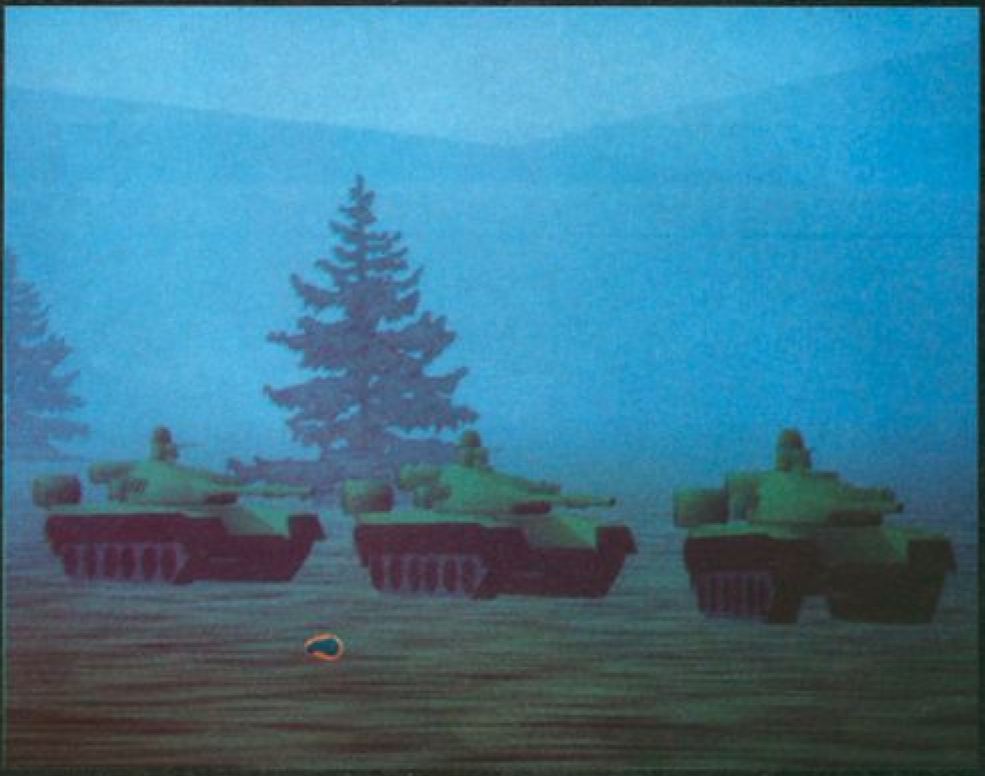
Tanks a Million

Battle-Vu is the gunnery system that GEC-Marconi hopes the British Army will adopt to train its tank crews in the future. If they get the contract it will be worth in excess of £30 million. "Our Battle-VU simulation has been designed as a precision gunnery training system which faithfully replicates the gunner's and commander's stations of a main battle tank. Trainees can practise engagements in real-time, authentically reproducing the real world environment," says GEC-Marconi. "Battle-Vu provides a high-fidelity simulation of the gunner's and commander's sights, through which the 1024-line colour monitor display units are viewed. The external scenario and targets are entirely modelled in 3D so giving total freedom of movement to your vehicle for single or troop configurations."

Battle-Vu's technical specifications are very impressive. The system has dual R3000 RISC processors each running at 25MHz, 16Mb of main memory and a 780Mb hard disk. Eight graphics pipelines provide geometry, scan conversion and display sub-systems. The whole set-up is connected to a simulation computer and instructor station via an Ethernet link.

"All targets are fully three-dimensional objects which can be viewed from any location," confirms GEC-Marconi. "Targets contain sufficient detail so that recognition between types is possible at the appropriate range. Battle-Vu gives a Moving Own Vehicle capability with complete freedom to move, and traverse and elevate sight directions. The Battle-Vu visual system provides varying levels of smoke, fog and cloud together with seasonal effects. Battle-Vu's sound effects system creates FX for your own vehicle engine, turret movement and vehicle motion; your own fire with all types of ammunition; commander's instructions and digitised audio loader's responses; return fire."

"Battle-Vu can be data linked in three's or fours to operate in concert in the same way as a troop of real tanks - including radio-net communications. Courseware supplied by Marconi Simulation for Battle-Vu comprises almost 1400 exercises and is supplemented by an automated record system which captures data from individual students, controls their progression through their particular curriculum, prints results and allows statistical analysis." All this could be yours for a cool million pounds.

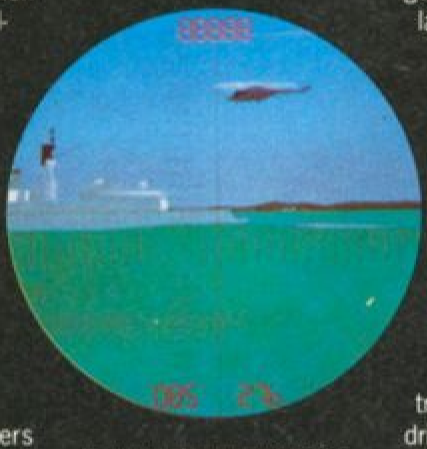


Three Soviet T-80 main battle tanks line up for the slaughter...

"Grandslam's Hunt for Red October is technically accurate and feels right."

Les Grant, General Manager of GEC-Marconi Simulation

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS
YOU"



Up your periscope, matey! GEC-Marconi's new tank gunnery simulation has the same technology used in its Pericope Simulator developed for the Dutch Navy.

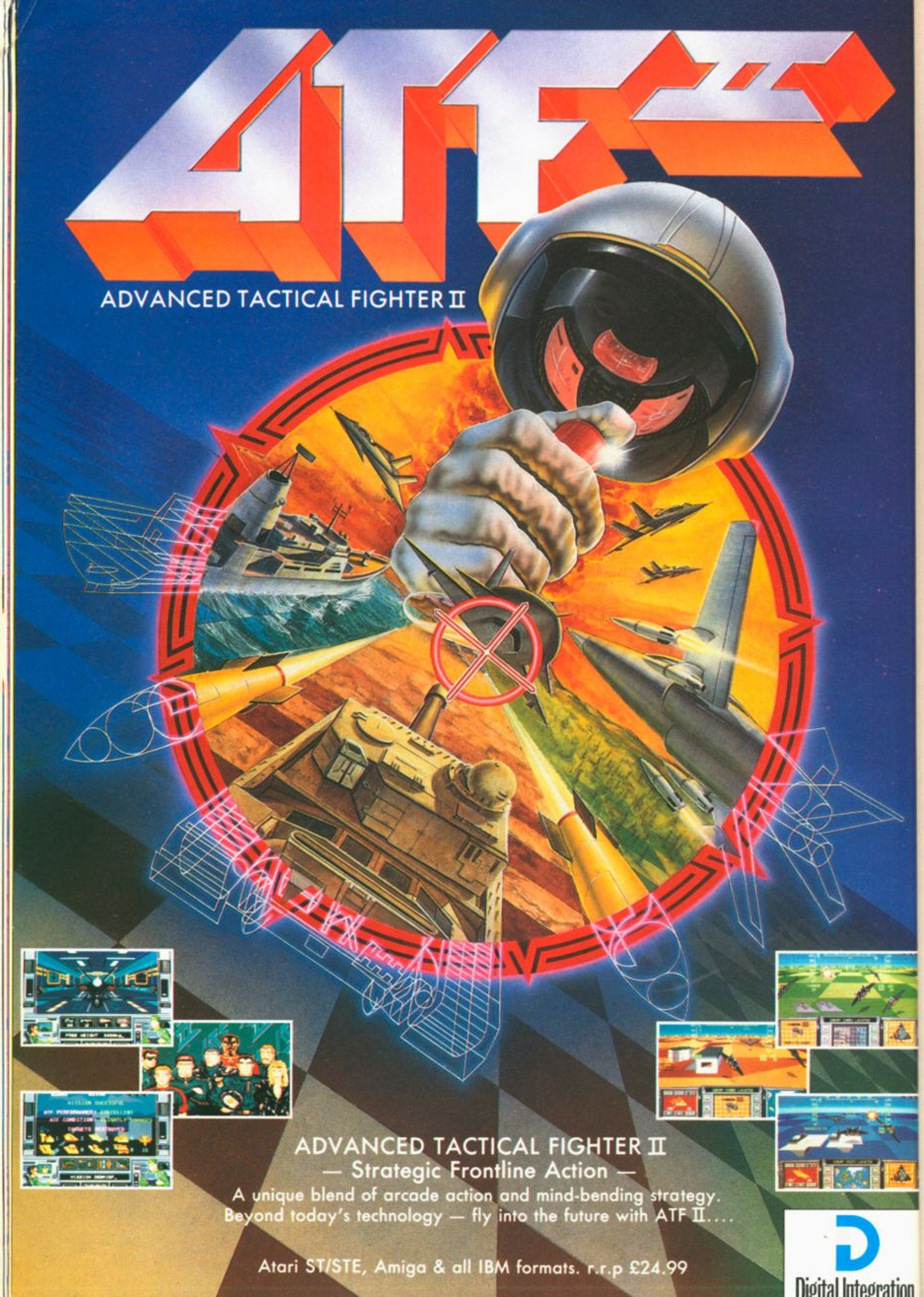
arcades. It's like comparing the line-vector graphics seen in Atari's classic arcade game with real video footage of tank warfare. Based around Silicon Graphics' supercomputer visual technology, this simulation can deliver one million polygons per second, with a polygon-fill rate of 200 million pixels per second. Peak pixel performance or what? Even the user controls for GEC-Marconi's simulation resemble a proper tank turret, with two multi-function joysticks and a binocular sight system.

Don't despair. GEC-Marconi is planning to join the coin-op club producing arcade game versions of its military simulations. Who knows, it could even go the other way - Sega, Konami and Atari might produce budget simulators of nuclear submarines... provided you don't mind the odd sprite glitch as you unleash your store of megadeath missiles.

The idea of one of the world's leading military suppliers turning its attention to creating video games seems a little strange at first, but the concept is hardly surprising when you discover that Dr Les Grant, the General Manager of GEC-Marconi's simulation facilities in Fife, Scotland, is a veteran gamesplayer. "The *Kick Off* series is incredible", enthuses Grant. Watch out Dino Dini (the creator of *Kick Off*), you may end up writing arcade games based around a submarine's periscope or running a nuclear power station, both of which have already been done by GEC-Marconi for the Dutch Navy and British Nuclear Fuels, respectively.

Grant tried to get GEC-Marconi involved in the arcade games industry back in the early 80s, when Pioneer first launched its videodisc system. Unfortunately, he was pipped at the post by Don Bluth and his *Dragon's Lair* laserdisc adventure. The reason behind GEC-Marconi's change of heart is the shock from the collapse of the communist Eastern Block circulating through NATO's military establishment. The Iraqi's may have provided a stop-gap, but the writing is clearly on the bunker wall - manufacturers of military kit will have to diversify their business if they're to survive into the next century.

If GEC-Marconi's new venture is successful, we could see other military contractors join the game-train. The next generation of arcade gamesters could be driving M1 Abrams tanks around Iraqi deserts, flying B2 Stealth missions over North Korea and taking out South American drug barons in Apache helicopter gunships - using dedicated sim consoles from the likes of General Dynamics, Lockheed and Hughes Aircraft. Of course you'd have to sign the Official Secrets Act as you enter the arcade - and high scoring players would be automatically drafted into the armed forces. You have been warned!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Ivan Sutherland's original work nearly 25 years ago has spawned dozens of research projects, each following the 'bolt-on-bits' philosophy of VR. This is VPL's set-up in action...

Building new worlds

ACE continues its journey into the future with a definition of virtual reality, an interview with Jaron 'Cyberspace' Lanier, a glimpse at new developments in interactive fiction, and a trip to Virtual Egypt...

Everything's virtual these days. The Battletech centre (soon to be set up in London and first covered in ACE back in August 1989) was labelled 'virtual' in a weekly magazine, Ian Andrew of Incentive claims that his *3D Construction Kit* enables you to construct your own 'virtual realities', and ACE editor Steve Cooke is reported to exist in a permanent 'virtual 1969'. Of these uses of the word, only the last one seems to have the ring of truth. What's going on?

What's going on is one of the biggest bandwagons in recent techno-history and since ACE has been partly responsible for getting it rolling, we thought it a good idea to try and pin down exactly what *we* mean when we talk of virtual reality. After all, judging by some of the descriptions above, even a 3D shoot-em-up is a candidate for the virtual reality label and, as conceptual power-ups go, that one shouldn't be allowed to get off the ground.

Let's go to the horse's mouth: Dr Myron Krueger, the man who really got the VR ball rolling. We caught up with him at a conference in New York...

THE VIRTUAL PAST

The VR experience has been around since 1966 when a chap called Ivan Sutherland first developed a headset that allowed a user to examine a 'virtual room'. Four years later, Krueger was laying the foundations of the virtual experience with his 'Videoplace' concept that sought to involve the user in a computer-manipulated experience.

'Headset technology is very cumbersome and from the beginning my approach was completely different,' argues Krueger, 'The human isn't evolving at all and the computer is evolving faster than any technology in history. So clearly the interface to the computer has got to be the human itself – any adaptation you make to the computer is going to be obsolete in a couple of years.'

Krueger's approach, therefore, is to get away from designing ever more complex input devices, like VPL's Dataglove. One of his first set-ups was back in 1971, where he constructed a 'sensory floor' with hundreds of monitoring devices linked to a computer. This floor formed the basis of a whole series of interactions ranging from configuring it as a musical keyboard to setting up an on-screen maze that people had to negotiate on the Floor.

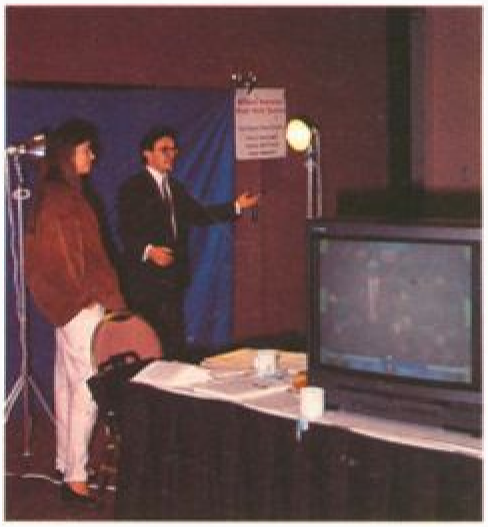
Sutherland's headset and Krueger's floor form the two complementary foundations of virtual reality – you could call them 'bolt-on' and born free' respectively. Sutherland's work has evolved into workstations like the W Industries unit (see last month's ACE) and products from VPL and Sense 8 in the States. Krueger's Floor has inspired creations ranging from the Subjective Technologies' Existential Funhouse (seen in prototype form at the ACE Living Room of the Future) and Vivid Effect's Mandala system.

It seems likely that these two strands of VR research will continue on their separate ways for quite some time. Krueger admits that the 'born free' approach of having no cumbersome hardware and allowing the user to prance about in sensitised space requires almost an almost utopian degree of technology, but it does have obvious attractions. The bolt-on-bits brigade, however, can argue that an equally Utopian technology could produce bolt-ons that were barely discernible by the user. The most likely outcome is that the two will meet virtually halfway.

SO WHAT'S VIRTUAL?

Meanwhile, Krueger has done us a big favour. He's come up with a definition of 'virtual reality' that we at ACE reckon sets the boundaries for this sort of experience and makes it quite clear what is 'virtual' and what isn't.

Talking of his Sensory Floor, he told us that 'I did it that way (using sensors) because I didn't want the computer to get *input* from the user. I wanted it to *perceive* the user. In fact, I didn't think any longer of a user, I thought of a *participant* in a *computer experience*.'



Krueger's concept of unencumbered virtual experience has led to the development of systems like Vivid Effect's Mandala (see ACE 40), which combines video and computer technology to 'put you in the picture'. Krueger pioneered this approach with a system that involved users in an on-screen battle with 'living graffiti' back in 1969

OK, so it could be argued that any old 3D game is a computer experience we can all participate in, but that's wrong. The key lies in Krueger's use of the words 'input' and 'perceive'. Input is something the user does deliberately – you hit a button, you twist a joystick, you boogie with the mouse. When you're not doing anything, the computer isn't receiving anything. In a VR system, even when the user isn't doing anything, the computer is still being inundated with information about his/her position, pulse rate, eye movement, or whatever the system is set up to monitor. This constant perceiving, or awareness of the human being is what makes the difference between a virtual reality system in which you can live/participate as opposed to a 3D environment which you use/control.

OK, so we lay down the law. Now write to us with your amendments...and stand by for a stunning ACE expose of the future of VR in the very near future.

MEET UNCLE BUDDY

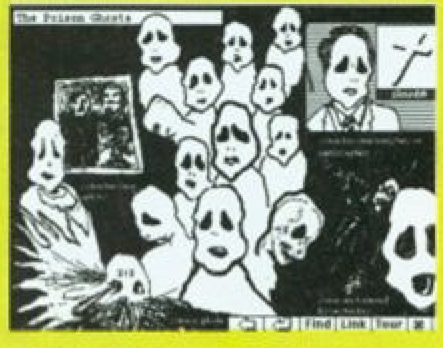
Well, you won't, actually. Because Uncle Buddy has passed away. However, he appears to have left you the contents of his hard disk...

This is the scenario of a recent work in hyperfiction by John McDaid of the NY Institute of Technology. He very kindly sent us some of the files from Uncle Buddy's disk, created using various applications, together with the following notes:

"Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse" is a hypertext fiction which attempts to create what Stuart Moulthrop has called "Object Oriented Text." Instead of telling "the" story through narrative, the Funhouse is an environment. The reader gets a letter from a law firm (See file "Lawyer's Letter") which tells them that a vanished science fiction writer has, for some reason, left them the contents of their hard disk (Electronic sketchbooks, maps, word processing documents, photo albums, projects-in-process) as well as some paper files and several cassette tapes with original music.

It is up to the reader to decide what, if any connection they had with this "Uncle Buddy," and what, if any, story is "told" by the agglomeration of electronic documents.'

Stand by for more coverage of John's work in future issues.



Go to the Barbers!

Our ACE correspondent met Cyberspace pioneer Jaron Lanier at the Los Angeles CyberArts Conference where the man in a datasuit with a virtual briefcase addressed the chosen few...

It was like stepping into the labyrinth hotel used in Kubrick's 'The Shining', except cyber fever was the only spirit roaming the halls. Before I'd even got through the door, I was confronted by six punks, aged between 16 and 20, who definitely looked as if they were on a mission, destination: Cyberspace. Somehow it all seemed as if a groovy San Francisco cyber street had been beamed down to this landmark hotel in the middle of vacated downtown LA. Very surreal.

After browsing round the exhibits and occasionally grabbing onto a chair or other item to remind myself that I was more than virtually there, I summoned up the courage to approach a wired and weary Jaron Lanier of VPL Research. Jaron is a very enigmatic individual – looking like a 'Rastafarian Hobbit' is the way other writers have described him. Let's forget about his appearance, eh? The guy's simply 'who he is' and his uncorporate manner and sheer drive is wonderfully refreshing.

As things turned out, in true virtual fashion, we ended up conducting the interview at the Los Angeles international airport, where I found Jaron playing a wooden flute while he waited for his passport and a boarding pass for a flight to a conference in Austria. Watching the masses all scrambling to their destinations, we wondered how many others were flying around dispersing information and how soon we would be 'In There' so we could do all our commuting from a single virtual space.

Jaron Lanier of VPL Research. OK, so the guy's got long hair. Now let's get back to business...

ACE: Jim Clark of Silicon Graphics Inc has been quoted by The Wall Street Journal as saying of you and your work that 'He's bumbling around with toys...' and Time Magazine has quoted a president of 'one computer-graphics firm' to the effect that 'he's promising something that will never be delivered'. What's your response to this negative coverage?

JL: *Well, my belief after speaking to Jim Clark about it is that he was not speaking from a rational point of view, in fact his comment is peculiar for two reasons. First, the toys he is referring to are his own machines and second, I've made him a rather large amount of money in the last year....As far as the Time Magazine statement is concerned, I think that an anonymous critic is a non-entity who is either so unimportant or so scared that their name will not be quoted. What can you say about such a person? I like informed criticism and think it's really important, but this stuff is really just journalists making their own career.*

ACE: Besides yourself and Eric Gullichsen of Sense8, Autodesk etc, who are the major players in Virtual Reality?

JL: *Right now there are hundreds of sites around the world. there's a very co-ordinated effort in Japan and many Japanese companies involved. Europe is slower but there are a number of European groups that are interesting (Watch this spACE...). I'm not aware of any set-up that doesn't at least use our equipment partially, and most of them use entirely our stuff, including the Japanese. We have Fujitsu showing a system based on and selling our components. We also have a major project with Matshushita.*

The academic programs should also be noted. In the United States there's major academic programs at the University of North Carolina, MIT, and the University of Washington, and minor programs in a number of schools including the University of California Berkeley. Personally, I would count the major players to be Ivan Sutherland, who is still alive and deserves a great deal of credit; Henry Fuchs at the University of North Carolina; Tom Furness, formerly with the US Air Force, now I'm very happy to say in academia at the University of Washington; David Zeltzer at MIT Media Lab...and many others.

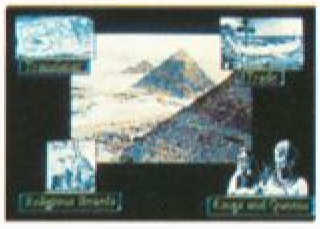
ACE: You've been reported as promising the development of some Virtual Reality Parlours. Do you know anyone that is actually starting these?

JL: *Yes, we are. We will have something fairly soon.*

ACE: There's a rumor that an unnamed company is developing the equivalent of Silicon Graphics computers on cards that plug into the Mac...

JL: *I know of about twenty companies who are attempting to do that and another twenty that I don't consider worth getting in touch with. It's no secret. However, the card level products being planned for Macs don't replace the same power of Silicon Graphics machines that we use. They would be able to emulate the lower level of those machines.*

At this point, Jaron was siphoned off through the bureaucratic immigration system. Our thanks to him for sparing us his valuable time.



VIRTUAL EGYPT!

Black Dog Productions are a small multi-media group probably best known for their 'Fractal Factory' PD software. Now programmer Ken Downie, keyboard player Ed Handley, and bass/beatman Andy Turner are turning their skills to creating computer environments. 'Our primary objective,' says Ken, 'is to develop and colonise computer-based synthetic environments..'. The first of these could be their development of 'Virtual Egypt', dedicated to presenting a silicon sight-seeing tour of ancient history, but without any danger of the tourists chiselling bits of the Pyramids in the process. You can get a pilot video of their cyber explorations direct from the company: contact Black Dog Productions Ltd, Thameswharf Studios, Rainville Road, London, W6 9HA for further details.

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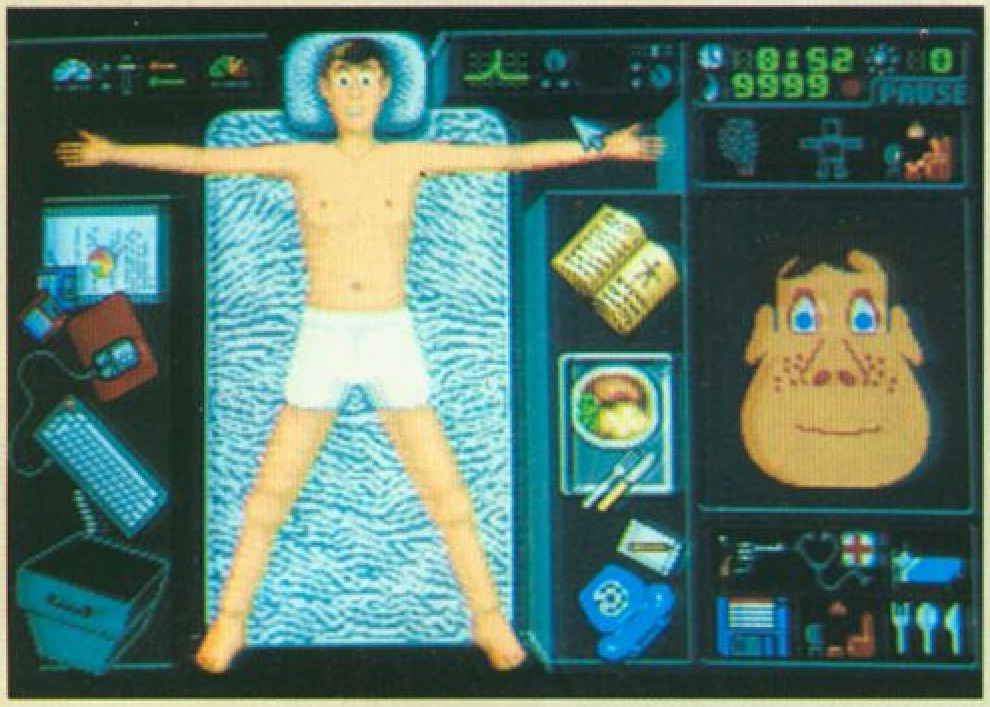
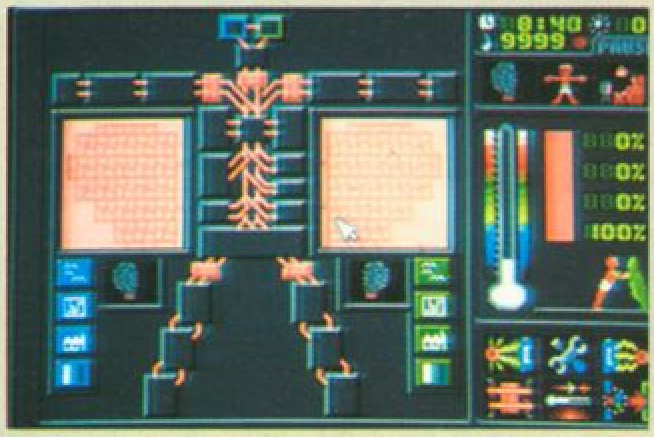


The Enemy Within – if the virus DOES get hold, you can always resort to surgery to remove infected parts. Not unreasonably, this does not hold true of the head – get a head-cold in this game and you're Christmas turkey...



The Enemy Within – a sickening (literally) scenario in which your host body is invaded by viruses. You have to master genetic engineering to keep your host alive...

GO TO THE ZOO

It's a jungle out there for software houses bent on bagging programming talent. Here's a sneak peek at some of Electronic Zoo's forthcoming trophies – the cage doors will be opened later in 1991

Electronic Zoo haven't been around for all that long, but but like any respectable hunting house they've bagged a wide variety of game. The company was set up following boss Stuart Bell's departure from Microprose and has since established offices on both sides of the Atlantic.

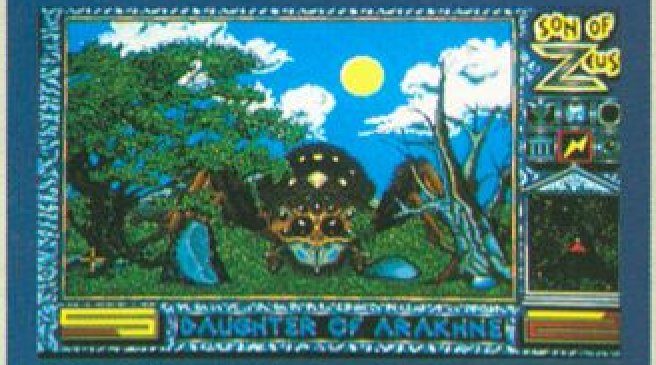
Since then we've had the ACE-rated *Treasure Trap* – a pretty conventional but extremely playable isometric 3D game; the ambitious *Xiphos* (856, issue 37); and *Eco Phantoms* (see this month's screentest, page 52). Having offices both sides of the pond gives the Zoo two territories to scour for product, so the public get to see a pretty wide variety of specimens.

Not that this company have had it easy, it has to be said. Starting a software house in the current climate is hard work and, behind the scenes, Zoo haven't found it easy to locate top-selling games. One problem is the continuing weakness of the ST and the Amiga in the States, so – as US boss Dick Todd told us on a recent visit – most of the active programming talent for those machines is still to be found in Europe.

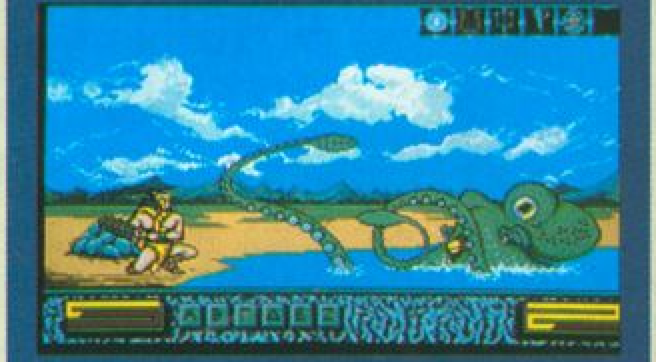
However, Zoo are already putting together a large collection of goodies for release later this year and, although the animals won't exactly be coming out two by two, this sneak preview is proof that there's enough out there to keep the cages occupied...

BEAST BUSTER!

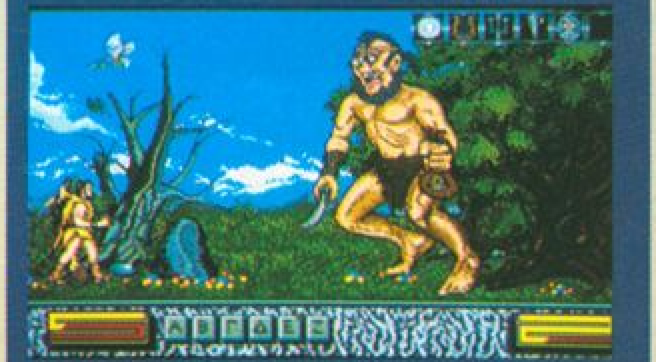
Zoo are hard at work on *Son of Zeus* – a mega-sprite combat scenario that they reckon will give Psygnosis' *Beast* series a run for its money. The game takes place in ancient Greece and has your hero nobbling all manner of mythical foes. Check out these pics for taste of the final experience...



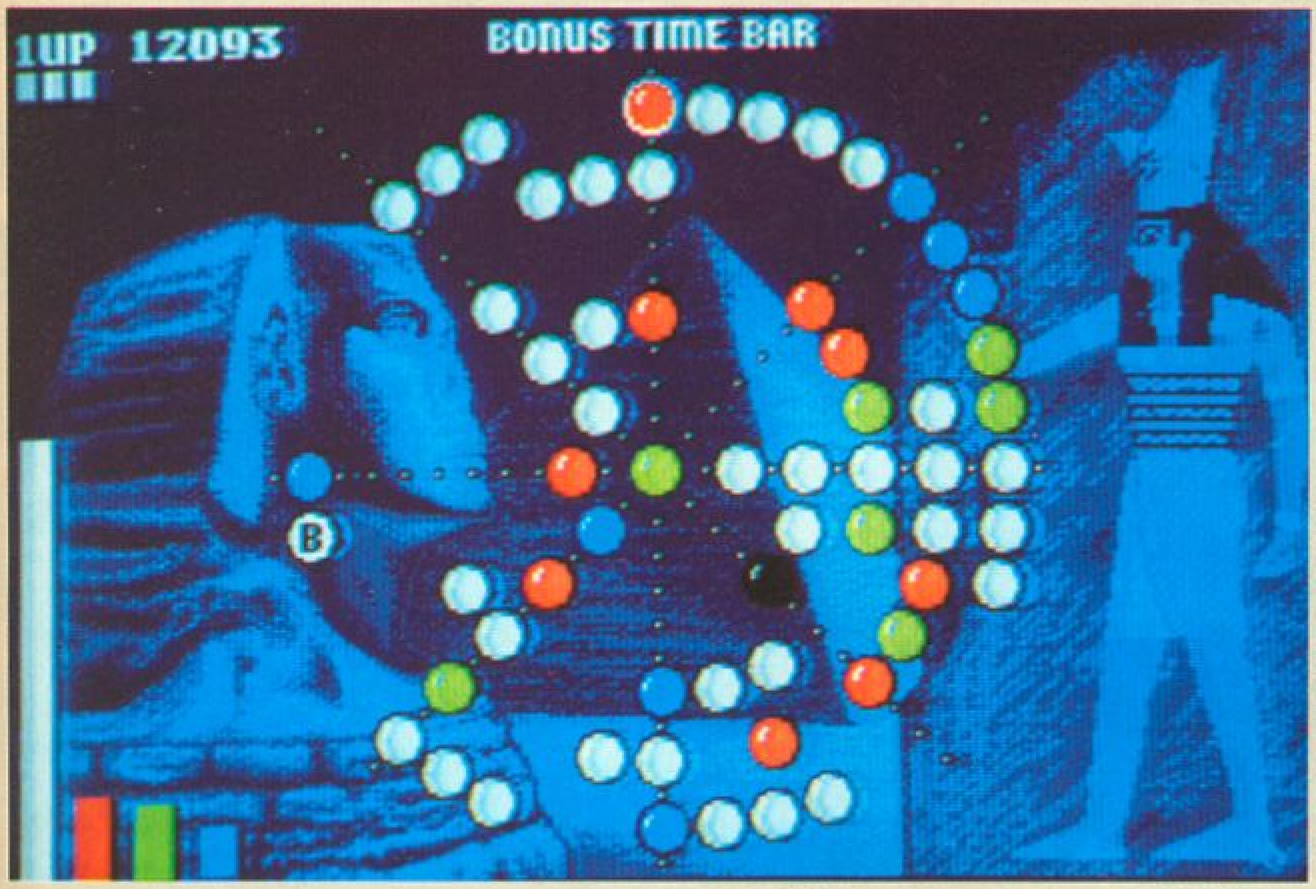
Shades of Shelob in *Lord of the Rings*, eh?



Nice pussy!



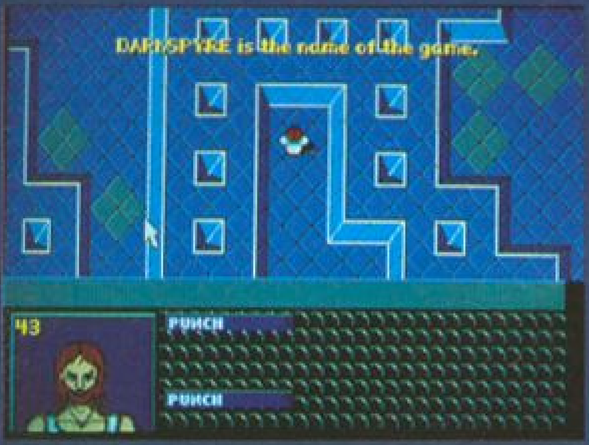
Cyclops – animating this beast isn't easy!



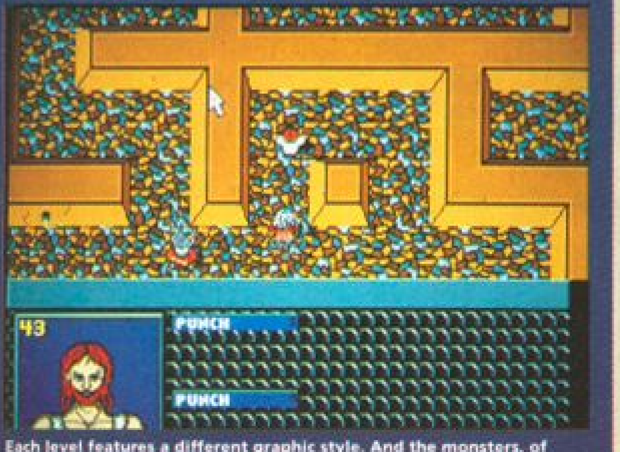
Dick Todd and Debbie Music hold the keys to the cages in the US. Zoo America is located in Baltimore, not far (surprise!) from Microprose. One major strength of Electronic Zoo – and a strength that we may well be hearing more about in the near future – is the company's close links with the coin-op industry. Zoo share an office in the States with Steve Koenigsberg's successful State Sales and Service operation and has a close working relationship with other US coin-op companies

DARK SPYRE

Dark Spyre is a traditional RPG-influenced adventure, though without the ability to form a party. The game features a clever – but rather fidgetty – command interface that makes good use of icon and pointer controls. Unusual attributes include the ability to make your character right or left handed (important because you actually put weapons and objects in your character's hands), an 'accuracy' attribute for throwing objects, and six different types of spell (ranging from enchantment for protection to divination for information). Unusually for an RPG, there's also an editor program available separately to design your own levels.



Getting started on Level 1



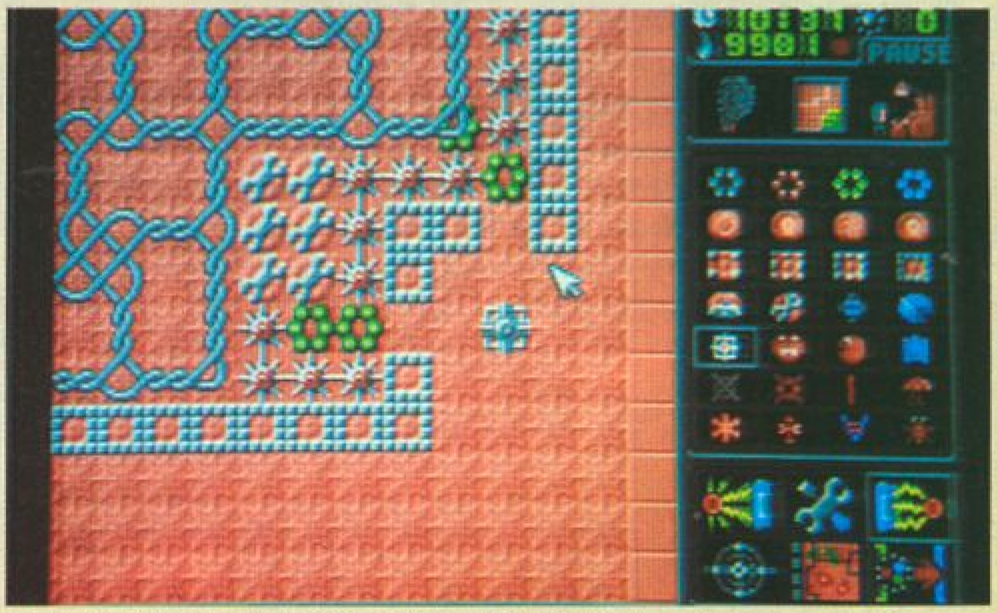
Each level features a different graphic style. And the monsters, of course, get tougher and tougher...

RGB is a highly original puzzle game, still in the early stages of development but already very playable. Radiating spokes converge on a central point and are connected by invisible circles forming a grid similar to a spider's web. You must manoeuvre a coloured ball from the perimeter to the centre where balls of different colours continually appear and disappear. To gain points you must collide your ball with one of the same colour in the centre. The strategy arises because of the other, stationary balls that are locked to the grid and block your path. You must rotate the grid and locked balls to open up new paths towards the centre – easy at the lower levels but very difficult at the higher ones where, as here, there are numerous locked balls.

The ball marked *B* is a bonus ball that you can collide with for one of several power-ups, including more time. The latter is indicated by the bar on the extreme left. You have to collide a certain number of balls of each colour and your curren; tally is shown by the coloured bars at bottom left. The black ball makes things harder by following you around and robbing you of time whenever it hits you.

Krafty set-up
Zoo have made use of the US connections to secure the UK distribution for Kraft trackball and joystick devices. This trackball is available in PC, Mac, Amiga, and ST versions – contact Zoo on 0285 641541.

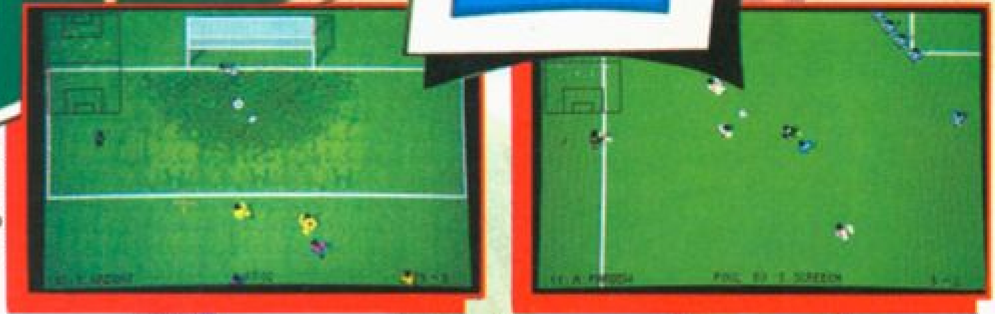
Stuart 'Ring my' Bell gets on his bike as the UK Zoo keepers pose on a misty day outside their luxury office location near Cirencester. Clockwise from left: Diarmid Clarke, Jonathan Kemp, Justin Scott-Exley, Paul Rowley, and maestro Bell



The Enemy Within – deep within the body, you're busy setting up anti-body defences to combat the viral menace

KICK OFF 2

A NEW DE
SOCCER S



- BLISTERING PACE
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KICK OFF 2 greatly enhances the gameplay of KICK OFF, winner of the THE GAME OF THE YEAR in the U.K., and similar awards right across Europe. A host of new features have been added to the ones that enthralled players the world over.

- **Full size multi-directional scrolling pitch with the players, markings etc. in correct proportion.**
- **1 to 4 players option. (Amiga and ST only)**
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- **Instinctive Kick Off joystick controls to dribble, pass, shoot, head or chip the ball and do sliding tackles.**
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- **9 types of corner kicks with full control of shot power. Long and short throw ins.**
- **Team selection from a squad of 16 with substitution and a choice of tactics.**
- **League and cup competitions with Extra Time, Injury Time and sudden death penalty shoot outs.**
- **Facility to view, edit and save the Action Replays and create a Golden Shots disc.(Excl. IBM & CBM 64)**
- **Facility to load Player Manager teams and tactics for a single or league game.**
- **Red and yellow cards, 16 different referees, injury time and a host of features to create an atmosphere for a game which is real fun to play.**

ST ACTION - The best game ever to grace the ST. Highest accolade I can give.
AMIGA USER INT - The best computer game ever **97%**
THE ONE - Ultimate soccer simulation. **96%**
THE ACE - Brilliant. Buy, Buy, Buy. **930.**
AMIGA FORMAT - Best footy game to have appeared on any machine. **94%**
ST FORMAT - What a game! Gem to play. Magic. **90%**
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POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY - Nothing short of brilliant.
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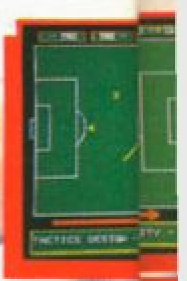

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AMIGA - ST £19.99

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THE FINAL WHISTLE
Amiga - ST £12.99 (Rel. Nov.)

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Two extra kits.
Look at any player stats. (attributes and skill) before selecting squad.

Totally new corner kicks with full control of the power, height and trajectory of the ball.

Enhanced throw ins and penalty shots.

Provision to flick the ball in the air and do a blinding header or a spectacular overhead kick.

New two players team mode. Player 1 in position or nearest to the ball and player 2 in position or keeper.

Linesmen and referee on the pitch.

A new player attribute FLAIR. A player with a high level of flair will try a solo attempt at the goal.

4 new pitches - Wembley - Icy - Muddy - Non-League

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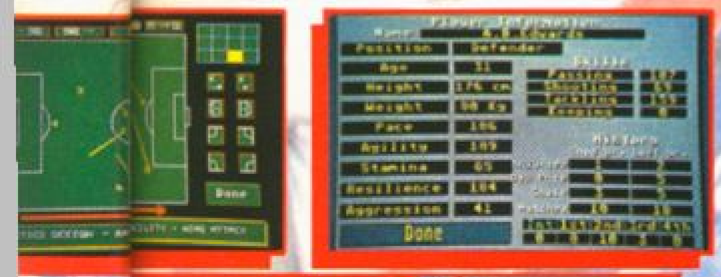

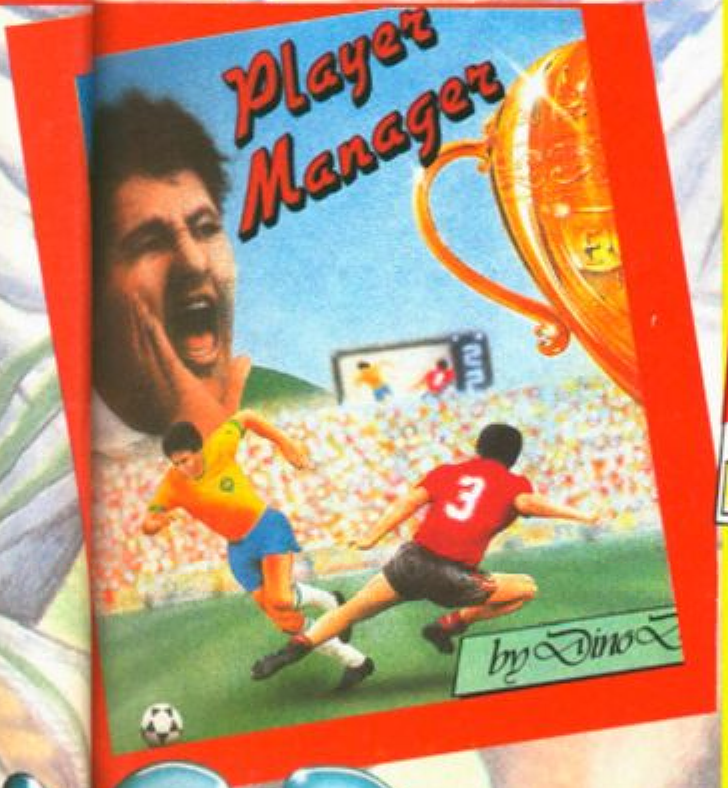

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NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION CENTER
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SEGA
SEGA

Sega, Konami, Taito...all the big names were at the AMOA Show, but it was hard goin' finding anything other than sequels to hits of yesteryear

Hard Goin'

Welcome to New Orleans and the biggest arcade games get-together in the States. While the delegates' spouses were taken on tours of croc-infested swamps, the sharks cruised the Show – and ACE correspondent John Cook was one of them....

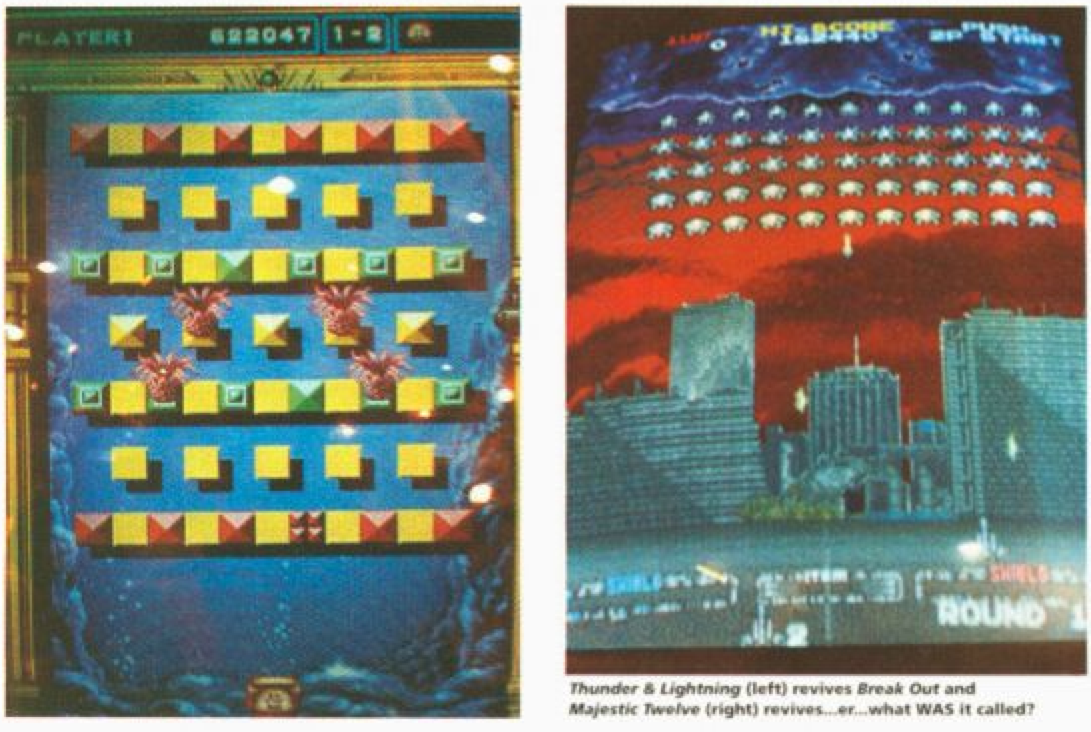
Every year the arcade owners of the USA get together, slap each other on the back for...umm, well, being American mostly, drink large amounts of the fizzy gnats' wee they call beer and lounge around in swanky hotels in exotic locations. That's Arcade Manufacturers Of America (AMOA) for you.

AMOA was certainly in need of peripheral glitz this year, because the games were having a hard time providing it. The world economy, so they say, is going into Recession. News readers are looking deeply depressed, the goat entrails are a bit green and the coin-op manufacturers are going back to ideas almost ten years old.

Yes, the mood was decidedly downbeat, as originality and technical innovation was deemed to be out and sequels and rehashes were in. Faced with the growing challenge of home consoles and a downbeat dollar the industry moguls have, by and large, junked creativity and imagination and well and truly battened down those sequel hatches.

Let's start at the beginning, shall we? Atari Games, lukewarm on the heels of its big hit last year, took this opportunity to launch *Race Drivin'*. Would that have any similarity to *Hard Drivin*? Certainly would – in fact the original track has been left in the box for you to re-live those golden moments of '89. Still, added has been a selection of cars to race, plus two new tracks; *Autocross* and *Super Stunt*.

Autocross is a bit boring and requires bags of opposite lock, *Superstunt* is fairly awesome in difficulty, with the real humdinger being a corkscrew section of road. Challenging, yes. New, no. Poking around in the original core code and bolting on some more silicon seems to have



Thunder & Lightning (left) revives *Break Out* and *Majestic Twelve* (right) revives...er...what WAS it called?

FINAL LAP
FINAL LAP

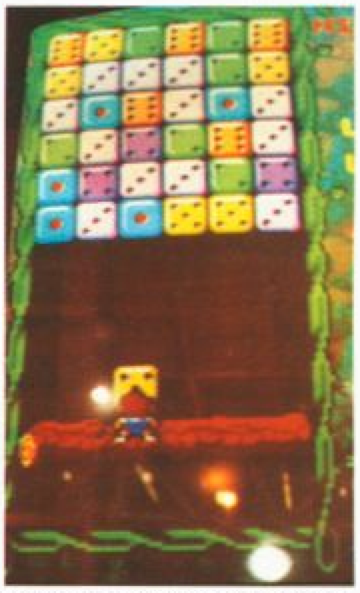
Final lap? Don't you believe it – this game idea will be doing circuits for months to come

PICK OF THE SHOW

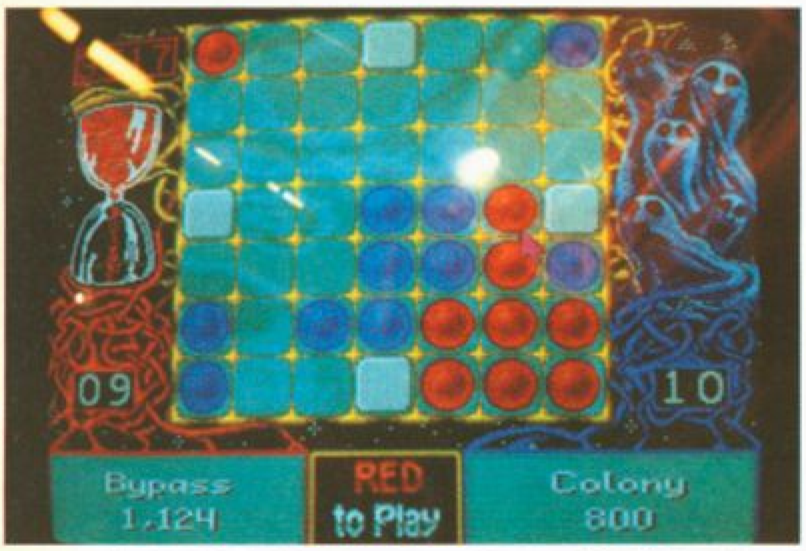
What do you get when you cross Block Hole with Poker Dice? An astonishingly wonderful game called Palamedies, that's what. Lines of dice step down the screen, while you fire dice up the screen, selecting the number you fire by cycling through 1-6.

Fire a die up the screen, and if it hits a like number, that die disappears. Keep zaping the lines of dice until, descending faster and faster you get overwhelmed and stomped on. Big deal. What makes this game, however, is that when you zap a die, it's transferred to a display below the main playfield. This display holds five dice and the idea is that you try to make poker dice hands – a full house, a straight, etc, out of the zapped dice.

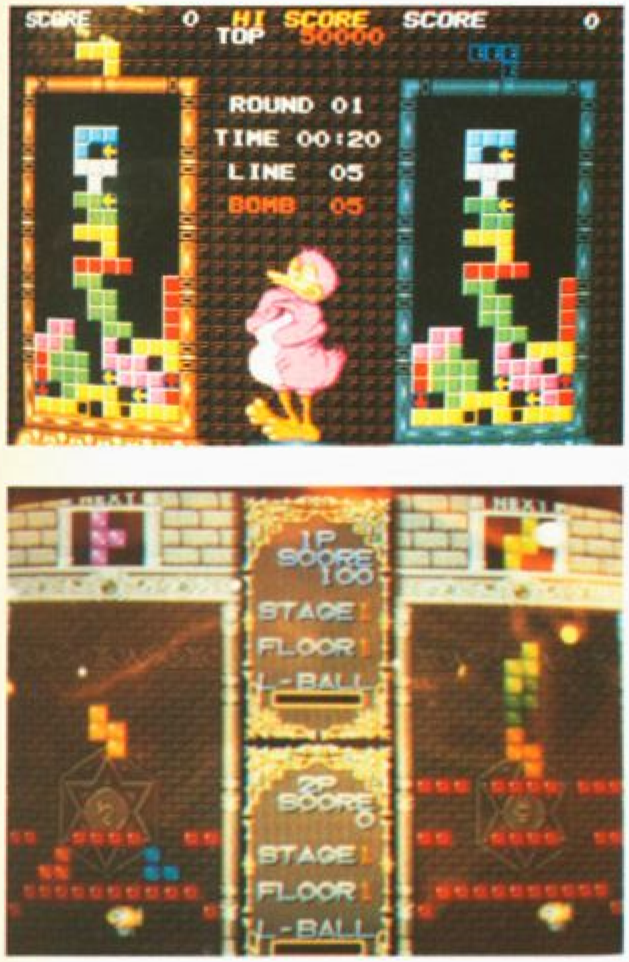
If you do this, depending on the hand you make, up to four of the descending lines magically disappear and you carry on in that fashion until you get overwhelmed and stomped on. It's fab, play it and expect it to appear on a home computer near you, jolly soon.



Palamedies, pick of the AMOA show, is a masterpiece of simple addiction



Ataxx – a superlatively addictive title which manages to give extra tactical twists to Othello and combine them with satisfying on-screen presentation. Definitely a strong contender for successful computer conversion



(above) *Mosaic* and *Puzzled* – yet more games 'inspired' by *Tetris*

increased the speed of the thing by about 15-20%, but in essence, *Race Drivin'* can simply be considered as extra tracks for the original.

This will be fun, for those of us that have already mastered the predecessor, but is unlikely to prove a lasting challenge over and above that.

On to Namco – past innovators par excellance. What have we here? *Final Lap II.* It doesn't take a genius to work out where this one has its roots, does it? Three extra tracks, plus the original – one harder, one about the same and one easier. Now, I loved *Final Lap* and like *Race Drivin'* more of the same can be welcome. For about 30 minutes. But it ain't going to get the punters dribbling on the carpet. Neither is *Dragon Sabre*, the sequel to *Dragon Spirit* that brings a new meaning to the word identical.

Capcom's offerings were similarly lacklustre: *Super Pang* – that is, *Pang; Carrier Airwing* – horizontal scrolly sprite thingy that plays better than its cousin but is, in effect, *UN Squadron II*.

Taito's main thrust was a competent, but sterile mow-em down, *Space Gun* – joined in that sad genre by *Ghost Hunters* from Sega and *Steel Gunner* from Namco. Tucked away on the stand, however, were more state-of-the-art sedatives going under the name of *Majestic Twelve*. Actually, it's *Space Invaders*. Did I hit a time warp or what? I pinch myself and check out the delegates for hot pants, platform shoes and flared trousers. No, this really is 1990.

Not so you'd notice over at Romstar – who were displaying a *Breakout* variant called *Thunder and Lightning*. Totally rad, def and hip, dude. Excuse me while I breakdance, Vicar. And over at the Fabtec booth – is that *Cabal* II I see before me, based in the Wild West and called *Blood Brothers?* And...Ooh, look! *Double Dragon III!* No doubt to be closely followed up by *Double Dragon IV*, subtitled – No more Mr Nice Guy, Urban Filth.

Of course, there were some gems of wonderfulness among the detritus. *Cisco Heat* confirms Jaleco as major league bunnies, being the best driving game for many a year, technically exciting and vastly playable. *Palamedies*, a PCB puzzle game, shows that the small guys can still deliver the goods from time to time. *Ataxx*, an *Othello* variant from Leyland, showed that at least one of the bigger companies is prepared to take a flier on an oddball idea, from time to time.

But largely, the dire standard of releases this year, in terms of originality, may well backfire on the coin-op industry as a whole, turning its doom and gloom predictions into a self fulfilling prophesy. Which is bad news for the punters that are prepared to pay for Advanced Computer Entertainment in the arcades and will settle for nothing less.Errr – doesn't that look a bit like....Ever since *Tetris* came out in the arcades and was a mega pan-galactic hit, all the manufacturers have been scurrying around trying to emulate that success in this newly found arcade/puzzle genre.

Some were good – *Block Hole* for instance; some were crap, *Puznic* being the most vile in my opinion. Whatever, none have come close to the doing the numbers of the Russian wonder. So if you can't beat 'em.....

That's the logic behind a couple of releases this Winter, anyway. On the Neo-Geo, you have *Puzzled*. Well, I certainly was – largely by trying to discern the differences between it and *Tetris*. Then there's a PCB called *Mosaic* – which has a nice twist to the *Tetris* format, by allowing you to alter the length/width of certain shapes as they fall down the screen.

Far be it from anyone to suggest that these games are anything other than legitimate variants of an established game genre – but don't be surprised if certain copyright holders start to get very stroppy indeed.

PANG
SPECTRUM
CASS & DISK
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CARTRIDGE
COMMODORE
CARTRIDGE
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ocean

NO TIME FO
BALLOONIN' AROUND!
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In fact you've hardly set your feet down in the migh
U.S.S.R. and it's all action. You sight up your latest and mo
formidable bubble poppin' piece...but now that bounc
bomb has just multiplied!!! Tour the world in the mo
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the bounce goes your wa

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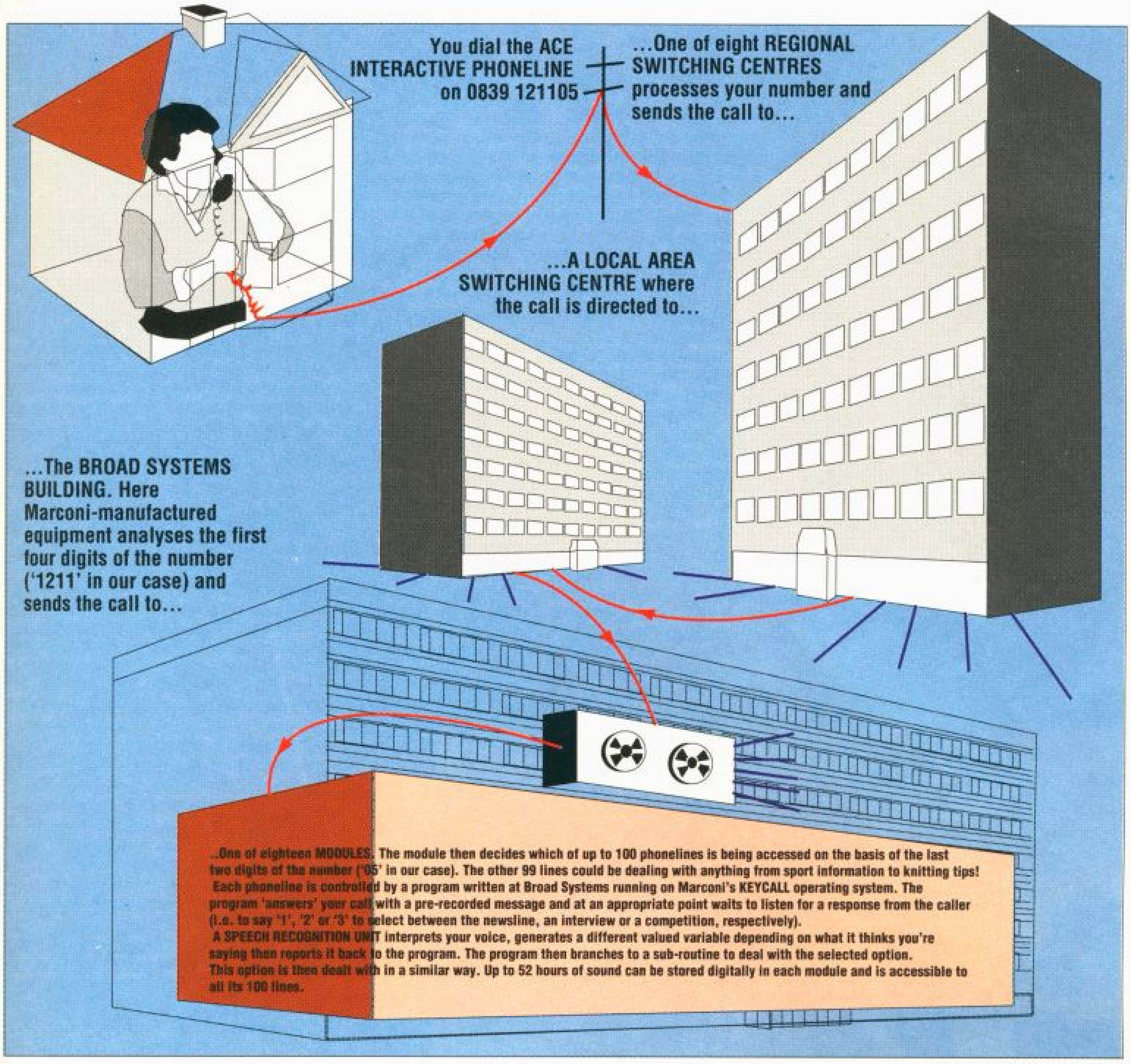


You dial the ACE INTERACTIVE PHONELINE on 0839 121105

...One of eight REGIONAL SWITCHING CENTRES processes your number and sends the call to...

...A LOCAL AREA SWITCHING CENTRE where the call is directed to...

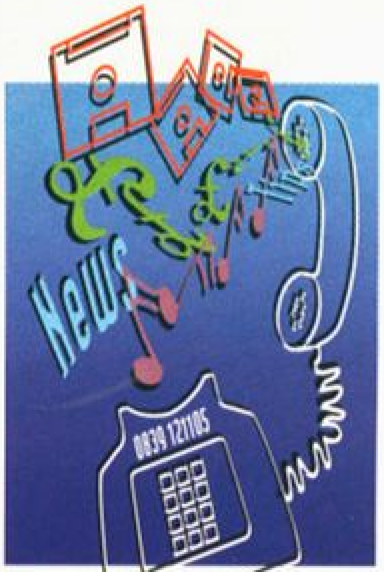
...The BROAD SYSTEMS BUILDING. Here Marconi-manufactured equipment analyses the first four digits of the number ('1211' in our case) and sends the call to...

..One of eighteen MODULES. The module then decides which of up to 100 phonelines is being accessed on the basis of the last two digits of the number ('05' in our case). The other 99 lines could be dealing with anything from sport information to knitting tips!

Each phoneline is controlled by a program written at Broad Systems running on Marconi's KEYCALL operating system. The program 'answers' your call with a pre-recorded message and at an appropriate point waits to listen for a response from the caller (i.e. to say '1', '2' or '3' to select between the newsline, an interview or a competition, respectively).

A SPEECH RECOGNITION UNIT interprets your voice, generates a different valued variable depending on what it thinks you're saying then reports it back to the program. The program then branches to a sub-routine to deal with the selected option. This option is then dealt with in a similar way. Up to 52 hours of sound can be stored digitally in each module and is accessible to all its 100 lines.

When I'm calling you...



ACE explains the technology behind its INTERACTIVE PHONELINE!

Ever talked to a computer? I don't mean typing in phrases to a parser, like in an adventure game, I mean actually spoken to one? If you've ever called the ACE Interactive Phoneline you have, although you probably didn't realise it. Oh, the voice on the other end of the line sounds human, but it's just a front - they're very cunning, these computers! But hang on, you say, at certain points I speak to it and it acts according to my instructions. How can a computer do that? Read on, and all will be revealed...

The route your call takes is probably best explained by reference to the diagram opposite. When you dial the Phoneline Number, a series of SWITCHING CENTRES direct your call to BROAD SYSTEMS, a com-

OOOPS!

Apologies to all who tried to call the ACE Interactive Phoneline early last month and got a dead line. Births are always a difficult time and problems outside our control meant the kick off had to be postponed for a couple of days. Everything should be running smoothly now. Consider our wrists well and truly slapped!

pany who specialise in interactive phonelines and take care of all the technological jiggery-pokery for ACE.

At Broad Systems the call is routed to a program that plays pre-recorded scripts written by the ever-toiling ACE staff (!?). Occasionally the program requires that the caller makes a choice (i.e from a menu). Some systems accomplish this by asking the caller to press a button on the phone's keypad. Our more advanced system lets the caller simply speak his or her choice (within a limited word range). The program then switches to various sub-routines depending on the selection, which in turn leads to other recorded messages and maybe further options and sub-routines.

Obviously this all gets pretty complex from the programmer's and engineer's point of view. However, all this effort and technology is being directed to one end - to make the ACE Interactive Phoneline as easy, fun and enjoyable to use as possible. Why not give it a try? Now ACE is never more than a phone call away...

SAY THAT AGAIN?

The theory behind the Marconi speech recognition unit used in our phoneline is fairly simple. The caller's voice is broken down into a frequency profile. The unit then compares this to a stored database of profiles for the various words it 'understands'. The closest match is then reported back and the program proceeds accordingly.

The obvious limitations on the size of the profile database mean it can used in two ways. It can be trained to recognise a large number of words for an individual's unique voice (i.e. you - but nobody else - could program your computer by speaking to it!) or recognise a smaller number of words from a broad range of voice types, using the sampled voices of several thousand people from all over the UK.

Our phoneline obviously uses the second form of database. It can recognise all the numbers from '0' to '9' and 'YES', 'NO', 'STOP', 'HELP' and 'CANCEL'. In addition there is a 'grunt' mode, where the system waits for any response from the caller and then continues. Because the database is stored on EPROM it can be easily adapted to other words. For example, the Robocop 2 game understands special words such as 'POINTS and 'INVENTORY'.

Although the theory is simple, the technology certainly isn't, and there are still some minor limitations to the system. It can't understand a heavily accented voice, for example, and the lack of clarity in older phone systems can also cause difficulties. However, most should have no trouble at all.

TOTAL KEYCALL

The programs that operate the phonelines run on Marconi's operating system, KEYCALL, which was specifically designed for the management of interactive phonelines. Each program is written by the staff at Broad Systems using the KEYMANAGER editor. For example, suppose you wanted to ask a multiple-choice question, with three possible answers,'1','2' and '3', the correct answer being numbered '1'. The code would look something like this (the text in italics explains each line):

01 - Library aeq1 Make variable A=1 (the correct choice) using a standard library routine.
02 - Voice quiz Play message asking the question.
03 - Library inb Call up library routine that uses the speech recognition unit to test the caller's reply and thus assign a value to variable B. The routine defaults to an incorrect answer if the caller takes more than 30 seconds to reply.
04 - Library isab Test if A=B (i.e is the answer right?) using a standard library routine. If no, then go to the next line of code. If yes, jump to the line after next.
05 - Branch wrong Jump to a subroutine for dealing with wrong answers.
06 - Branch right Jump to a subroutine dealing with right answers.

The more complex programs, particularly multiple-choice games like Robocop 2, could require that the programmer take account of several hundred decision branches, many of which will loop back into each other, so you'll appreciate that they can get pretty difficult to debug!

"Where's the nearest phonebox, creep?" PPC offers you the chance of becoming the tin titan in their new interactive phoneline game.

YOUR CALL, CREEP!

Your patrol car's radio crackles into life. "Robocop; 211 in progress at the gunstore on 4th and Delaware." A prime directive flashes on your visor to remind you of your duty - Uphold the Law. Tyres squeal as you spin the car around and head towards the scene of the armed robbery.

As you approach you hear shouts and the sound of gunfire. You stop the car. What now? Drive in and try to gain surprise? Or attempt to sneak in on foot? But perhaps it would be better to fire a warning, give the creeps a chance to surrender, then approach on foot? You get out of the car, fire a round into the air and move in. Unfortunately, that shot has given the perps enough warning to set up a lethal ambush...

Yup, that's right, thanks to the wonder of interactive phoneline technology you can become Detroit's deadliest law enforcer! The game's plot, based on the recent Robocop 2 film, has you seeking out and eliminating the evil drug barons peddling 'Nuke', the most addictive substance ever known, to the down-trodden populace of Old Detroit.

Basically the game takes the form of a multiple-choice adventure. The caller hears a plot situation, each pre-recorded by actors with sound effects dubbed in. Then you are presented with several options on how to react. The plot proceeds in different directions depending on which you choose. You can pick up objects found along the way and use them in situations where you think they might be helpful. To help spread out the phone bills there's a SAVE option where you are given a special code number that lets you continue where you left off next time you ring.

The game was written by The Phone Program Company, a new outfit set up by established game maestros Gremlin Graphics to develop the possibilities of this new entertainment media. PPC believes the combination of interactive story, vivid sound effects and your imagination makes this a totally new and exciting experience. Look out for the adverts!

YOU'VE READ ABOUT IT, NOW TRY IT!

The ACE Interactive Phoneline is on the air right now. Last month we offered you the opportunity to listen to the programmer of *B.A.T.* talking about his ACE-rated game, plus the chance to win yourself a copy of this amazing graphic adventure. This month there's a mega-competition to win yourself a game from the Top 20, which will come online on at 12.00 p.m. Wednesday, January 9th.

But that's not all. We at ACE know how frustrating it can be seeing a game on the shelves that looks good but not knowing whether it is or not because the reviews haven't come out yet. So this month sees the start of the ACE Reviewsline, where a selection of the very latest games will be given the definitive ACE once-over. The selection will be updated every Wednesday at 12.00 p.m., starting on January 9th. Essential listening for the discerning buyer!

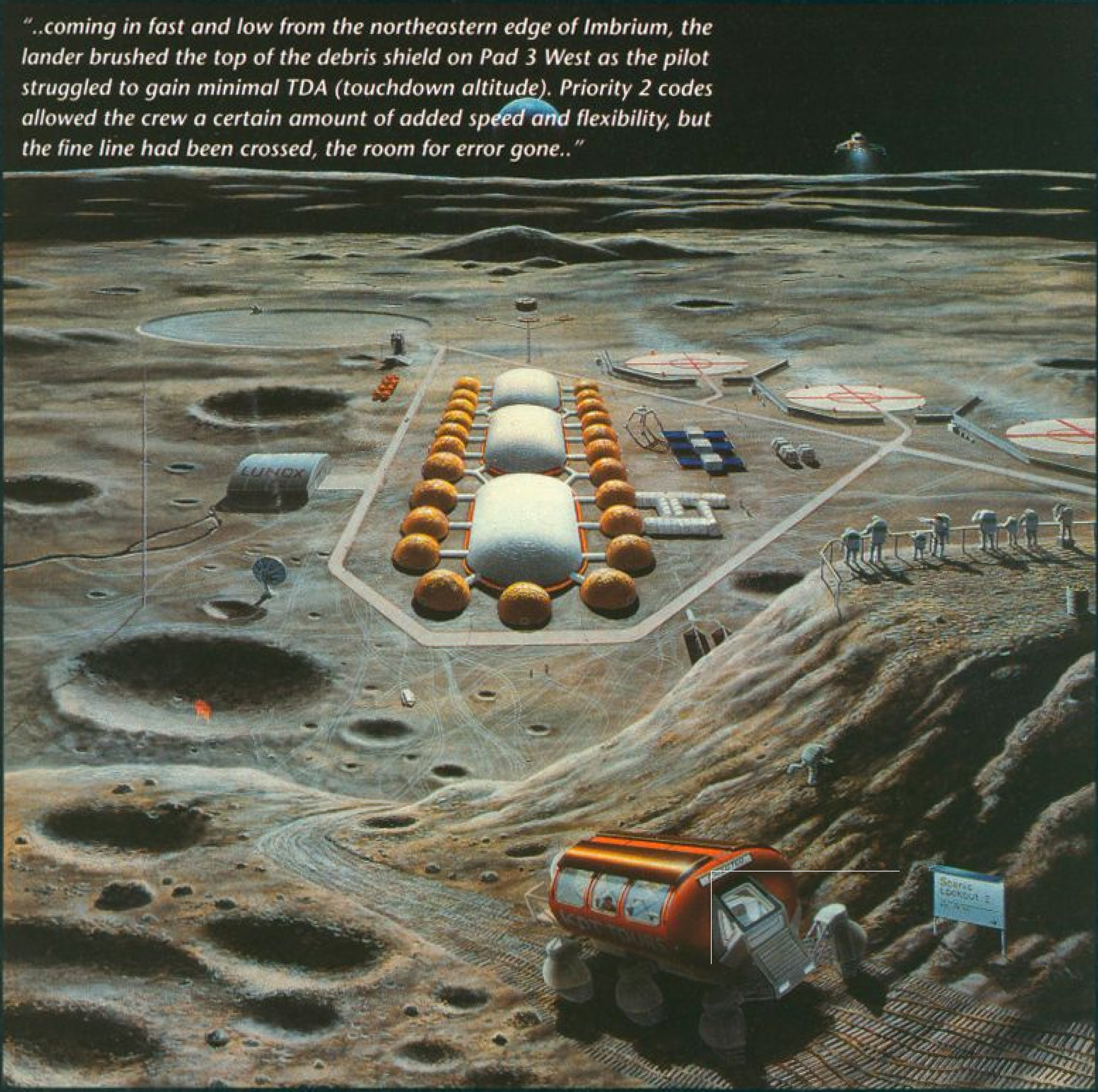
And of course there's the ACE Newsline, where you can find out all the latest salacious gossip and hot news from the crazy world of computer entertainment! Again, it's updated every Wednesday

0839 121105

Don't forget that number - it's the only one you need!

MOONBASE

Lunar Colony Simulator



"..coming in fast and low from the northeastern edge of Imbrium, the lander brushed the top of the debris shield on Pad 3 West as the pilot struggled to gain minimal TDA (touchdown altitude). Priority 2 codes allowed the crew a certain amount of added speed and flexibility, but the fine line had been crossed, the room for error gone.."

Gripping stuff!

Wesson International
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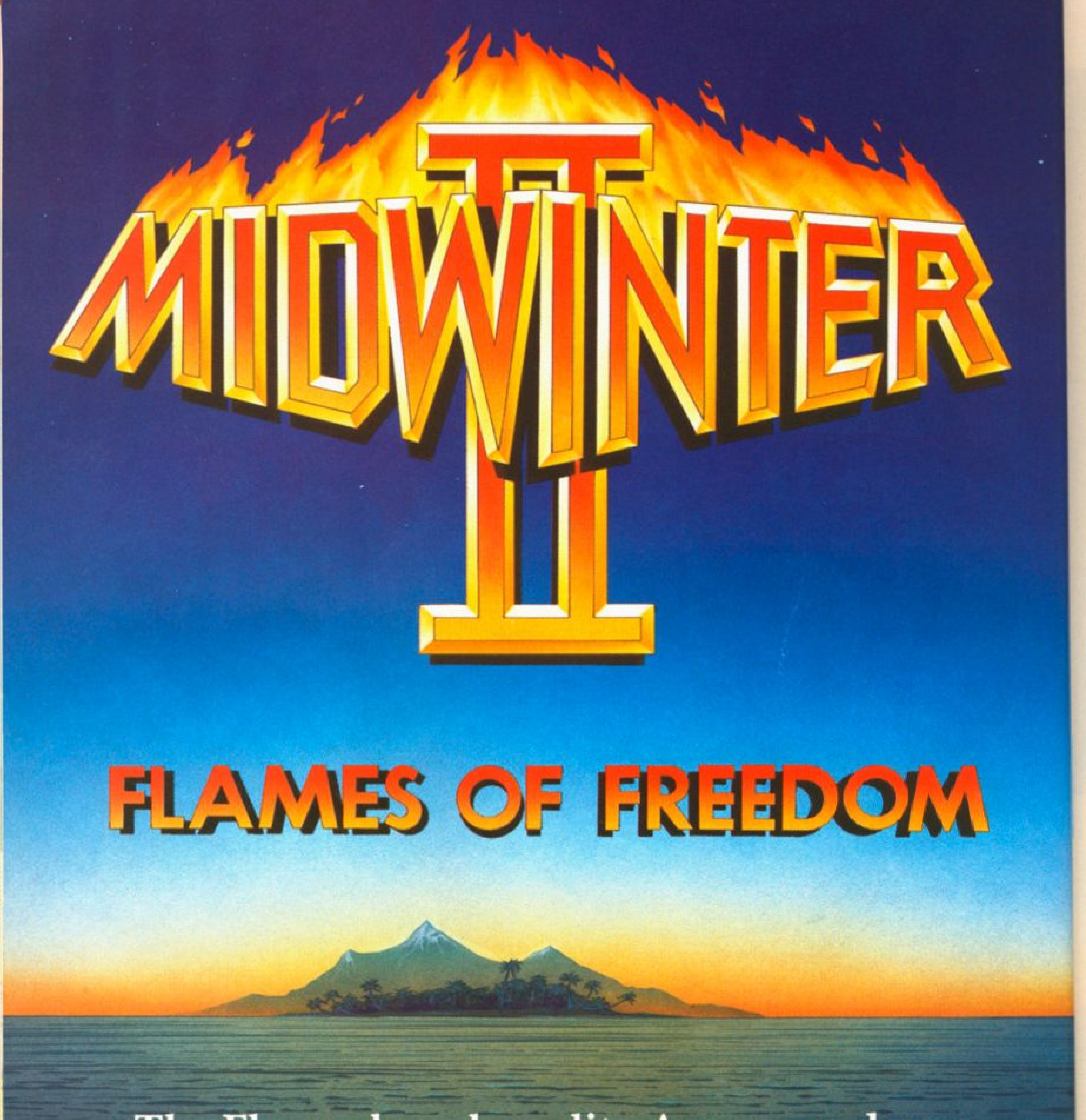
MINDSCAPE

For your local dealer, contact: Mindscape International Ltd, The Coach House, Hooklands Estate, Scaynes Hill, West Sussex RH17 7NG. Tel: 0444 831 761

For further information on Mindscape products and new releases, please call: 0898 234 214. Calls charged at 33p per minute off-peak and 44p per minute at peak times.

IBM PC & 100% compatibles. 640K RAM required. Hercules, CGA, EGA, VGA graphics supported. Twin floppy drives or hard disk required. Microsoft mouse optional. Amiga version available January 1991.


MIDWINTER II
FLAMES OF FREEDOM

The Flames have been lit - A new age dawns.

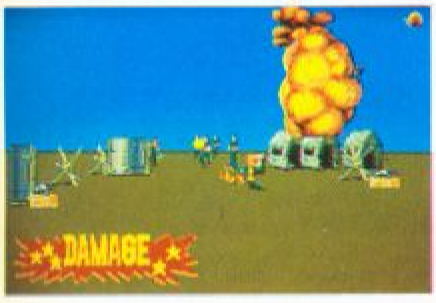
Midwinter II. Flames of Freedom will be available for your Atari ST, Commodore Amiga and IBM PC compatibles in the Spring of 1991

RAINBIRD

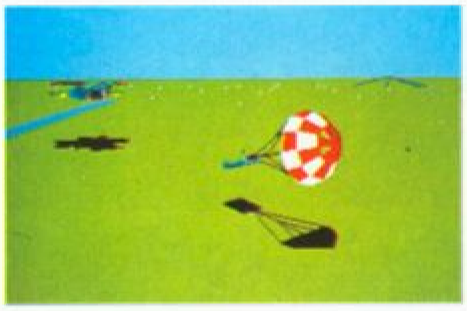
MASTERS OF STRATEGY

MicroProse. Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos. GL8 8LD

SCREEN TEST



Line of Fire: two player machine gun action from US Gold – possibly the best coin-op conversion for months. See page 60



Gauntlet 3: accessible solid 3D strategy for the action-minded gamesplayer on page 61

ACE RATED!

Question: Is this game really going to grab me? And for how long?
Answer: the PIC curve – the heart of the **ACE Rating System.**

The PIC – *Predicted Interest Curve*
– is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around.

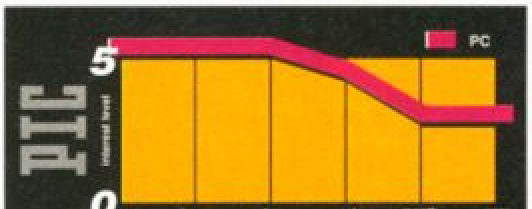
We on ACE know you don't just play a game – you experience it. The Predicted Interest Curve is the only review system that takes this all-important factor into account.

The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. And this can tell you a lot more about a game than just the interest levels...

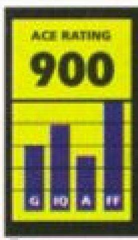
For example, a high one minute rating means that the game must look fantastic and get you all excited from the word go. That means it's probably a good game to show off to the neighbours – who probably aren't going to pay attention for much more than a minute anyway.

The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.

Finally, you've got the month and year ratings. The better a game holds up here the more deserving it is of your hard earned cash.



The packaging and presention are mediocre, but after a few minutes the depth of gameplay really bites. Unfortunately a repetitive challenge means it's downhill from there on...



VERSION DETAILS

Every version tested gets its own ratings for graphics, IQ factor (that's brain strain, Igor), audio, and fun factor. The Fun Factor goes up the scale when a game is easy to pick up and get into, a lorra laughs, and a simple but addictive delight to play. Heavyweight strategy numbers based in Neasden and featuring text-only reports need not apply.

- **The very fast multi-level parallax scrolling**
- **Excellent sound effects in the dentist's waiting room**
- **Gameplay in the 3D maze Barbican section**

- **Limited use of objects**
- **Over-frequent disk access**
- **Colour combinations in the bedroom scene**

We won't rate a game unless it represents what you'll find on the shelves. If a game's not finished, we won't rate it. Instead we give it an ACE Preplay verdict panel that tells you how we think it's shaping up. In most cases, a full review of the finished game will follow in a later issue.

ACE AWARDS

ACE always awards seals of approval for outstanding software performance. If a game really breaks the boundaries in sound, graphics, or originality you'll see the appropriate ACE Award flash on the review. Unless it's truly dire – in which case it'll get the ACE Turkey award. Software houses: you have been warned!

Awarded to games of outstanding quality – but due to be replaced next month with the new ACE Trailblazer award (see p15)

Originality counts for a lot these days, and any games that have it deserve a special mention. This ACE award is reserved specifically for these rare games.

One of the first things to grab you in a game is its graphics. Games that redefine the state-of-the-art get this seal of approval from ACE.

Sound is the 'forgotten' aspect of games – but can make or break them. ACE only awards this one to brilliant use of audio in a game.

THE LINE UP

ON COMPUTER *pages 44-61*

44 **ROBOCOP 2** *Ocean*
45 **SPECIAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION (CHASE HQ 2)** *Ocean*
46 **AWESOME** *Psygnosis*
47 **LIGHTSPEED** *Microprose*
48 **BOTICS** *Krisalis*
48 **HILL STREET BLUES** *Krisalis*
49 **STUN RUNNER** *Domark*
49 **Z-OUT** *Rainbow Arts*
50 **KINGS QUEST 5** *Sierra*
52 **ECO PHANTOMS** *Electronic Zoo*
54 **BADLANDS** *Domark*
55 **IRON MAN'S SUPER OFF ROAD** *Virgin*
56 **MIDWINTER 2** *Microprose*
58 **TOYOTA CELICA** *Gremlin*
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59 **JUPITERS MASTERDRIVE** *Ubisoft*
60 **LINE OF FIRE** *US Gold*
61 **BATTLE COMMAND** *Ocean*

ON CONSOLE *pages 67-70*

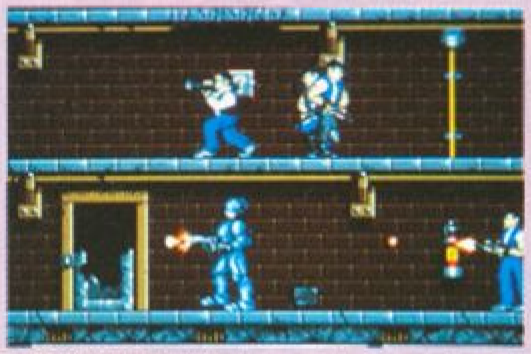
*Megadrive **John Madden's American Football**, Super Famicom **Mario 4** and **Days of Thunder** on NES. Yo-yo, spinners...*

ON CD *page 72/73*

*Go to blazes, bro – in Gremlin's stunning **Little Devils***

SEQUEL POWER!

First came the licences. Then came the sequels. Now we have Licenced Sequels. Just how far down the road of follow-ups and tie-ins can Ocean go?



ROBO POWER! Multiple baddies roam the screen and explode when hit by Robo's bullets. Things look pretty good here.

Robocop 2, the movie, packed neither the Robo-Power nor Robo-Action the trailers so gleefully promised. Aside from the excellent special effects of Robocop 2, the robot, it was a largely uninspired affair.

Robocop 2, the computer game, suffers from the same problem. It's well programmed and full of all the requisite elements for a fun-filled game, but is utterly devoid of originality.

Nevertheless, Robocop 2 does deliver an extremely high body count and a very tough challenge.

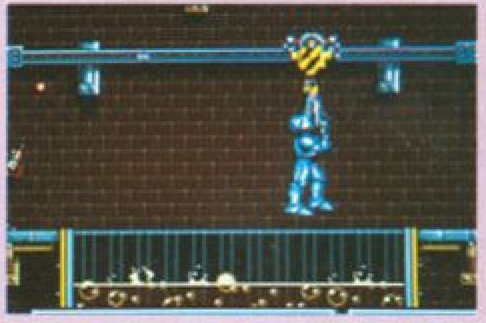
Robo's mission is to track down the evil Cain and put an end to his distribution of the deadly narcotic Nuke. Eventually, Cain gets turned into a big robot who in turn must be tracked down and destroyed.

Three game-styles are incorporated. The main is the side-on scrolling blast. Robocop must wipe out the bad guys, locating and confiscating cannisters of Nuke, while rescuing innocent bystanders on the way. In the ST version the innocents are scientists, in the Amiga version, they look like truck drivers.

The level of action throughout the game is impressive. The number of bad guys to be taken out and the quality of their animations cannot fail to impress. It's a shame that on the ST version you can shoot through the bad guys legs and *they won't even flinch.*

Shooting open Coke dispensers and collecting the Coke inside tops up Robo's energy. It's essential to keep guzzling the Coke, as Robo's energy gets sapped at an alarming rate by enemy bullets and laser beams. In between each stage is a firing range and a don't-go-back-on-your-own-footsteps puzzle yielding an extra life if successfully completed.

Robocop 2 is a genuinely tough challenge. And



The Brewery. Some of us in the Ace office found it difficult to avoid plunging headlong into the vat of beer...

CHASE HQ 2

Chase HQ offered a thrilling mix of racing and crook-busting action. The sequel offers, well, the same again.

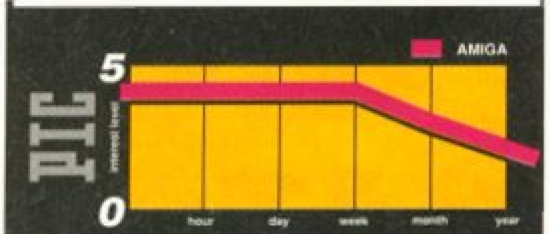
Evil villains have kidnapped the Mayor's daughter and are racing to their hideout. The Special Criminal Investigation unit has been drafted in to apprehend the villains and rescue the hijacked chick.

Information is fed to you through Nancy at Chase HQ. She'll detail the type of vehicle the current crook is driving, and also brief you on special hazards/assistance on the next stage.

Racing through the levels in your shiny red motor, you are pestered and harassed by sunday drivers, petrol-bomb-throwing motorcyclists and the henchmen of arch baddie Bob.

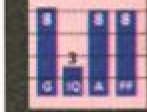
Your aim is to race through each level in the quickest possible time and apprehend the driver of each suspect vehicle.

Apprehending the bad guys, of course, is easier said than done. Rather than simply barging into them, you must blast them into submission with rockets, handguns and shotguns. A damage indicator on the left of the screen displays how close to conking out the target vehicle actually is.



There's plenty of high speed excitement to engross you for a little while, and although you may find the early stages a bit easy, the randomness of the road-hogs, rock-slides and motorcyclists will keep you on your toes for some time.

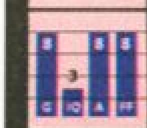
ACE RATING
840



AMIGA

Graphically far superior to the first game, Chase 2 offers more on-screen cars, more colours and is generally a lot more appealing to play. The music is nice and lightweight, and digitised speech offers some atmospheric snarling from the bad guys and the charming tones of Nancy. Pretty well polished.

ACE RATING
840

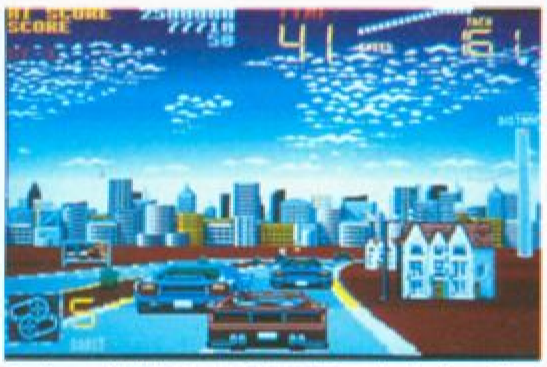


ATARI ST

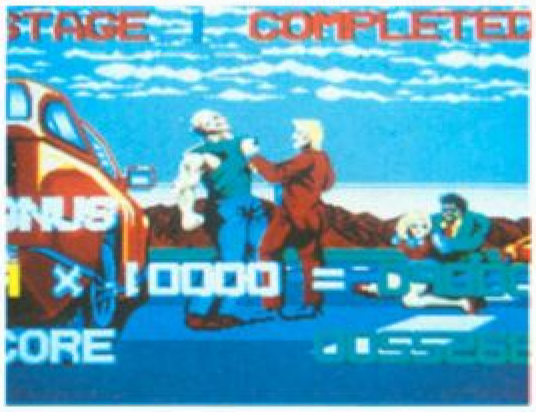
The ST version is virtually identical to the Amiga, except that it's slightly slower, and more difficult. The music and sound effects are the same, if a little weak compared to the Amigas booming tones, but such differences are rather trivial, and tend to balance out in the overall feel of the game.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
SPECTRUM	£10.99	OUT NOW



On the road with the Special Criminal Investigation boys. The traffic these days is a nightmare.



Congratulations! Gravelly digitized speech issues from the speaker as your first nick blabs about Mr Big. (?)

ROBOCOP 2

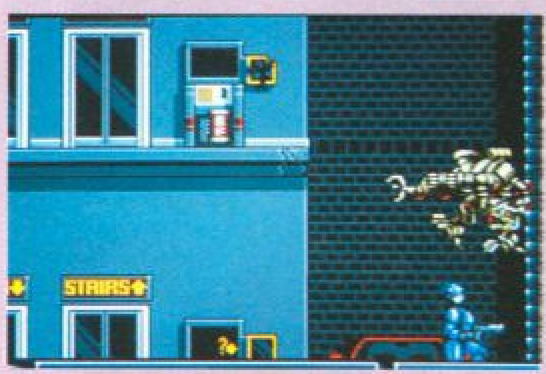
Ocean reigned the charts for more than a year with the first Robocop game. Can they pull it off again?

despite the fact that you have to start from the beginning of your current level each time Robo conks out, it's pretty addictive.

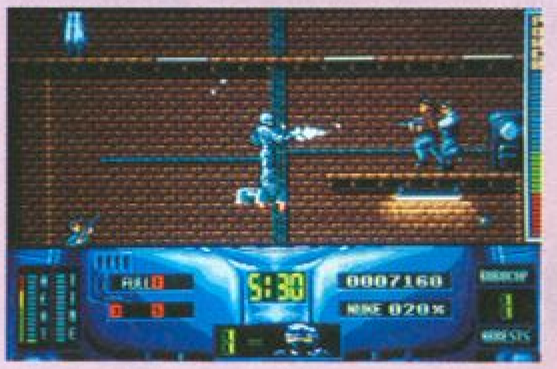
But as you play through the game, you may well find yourself thinking; Isn't the opening scene at the River Rouge complex somehow reminiscent of the warehouse level in Untouchables, or the Axis Chemical plant in Batman? Aren't the deadly droplets of fermenting beer in the brewery exactly the same as the deadly droplets of acid in - again - Batman? Aren't the guys on motorbikes strangely similar to the guys on motorbikes in Sly Spy?

In short, should it really be so easy to imagine Robocop being replaced by Batman, Sly Spy, Arnie, Eliot Ness or indeed any of Ocean's recent movie heroes?

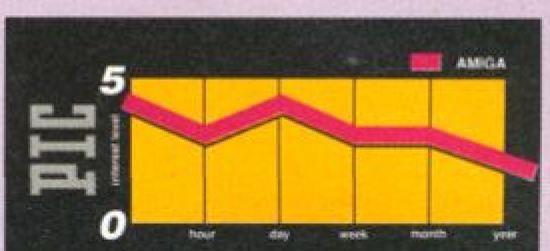
●Jim Douglas



Approaching the end of the game. Cain, in Robocop 2's body tumbles down a skyscraper on top of Robo.



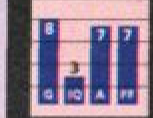
ATARI ST: Watch out for long falls, as the ST Robo can't stand them.



The volume of action offers quite a high hit level to begin with. After a couple of hours, though, you may well be frustrated by the difficulty. Stick it out for a day and there's more fun to be had. Gamesplayers who like their programs tough will keep coming back for more, as Robocop 2 is a hard nut to crack

ACE RATING

800

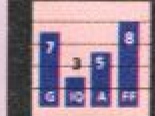


AMIGA

Large graphics and pretty good animation. Control over Robocop is comprehensive. Unlike the ST version he can shoot open packing cases and bins, and fire vertically. Long falls don't seem to damage Robo too badly.

ACE RATING

800



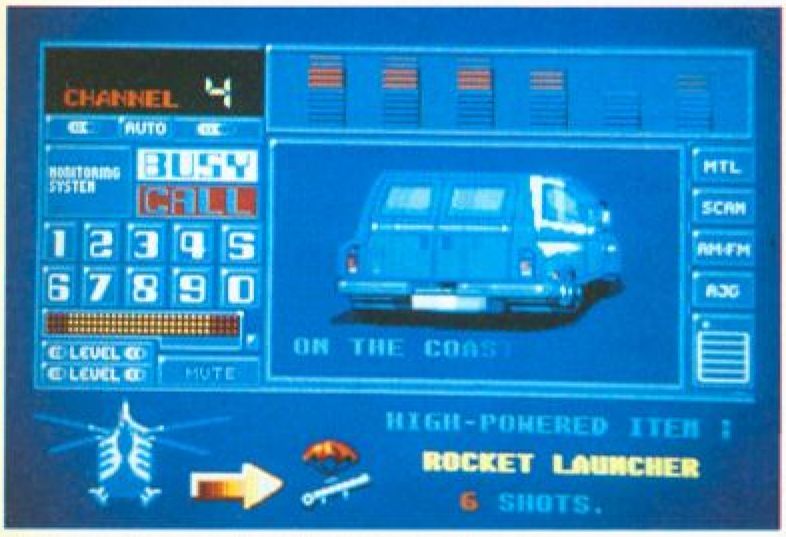
ATARI ST

Robocop's animation is excellent. Although all the characters are smaller than in the Amiga version, they move more naturally. In this version, Robocop cannot fire directly upwards and must take time out to punch own packing cases. More attention must be paid to going the right way, since too long a fall will kill Robo.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW

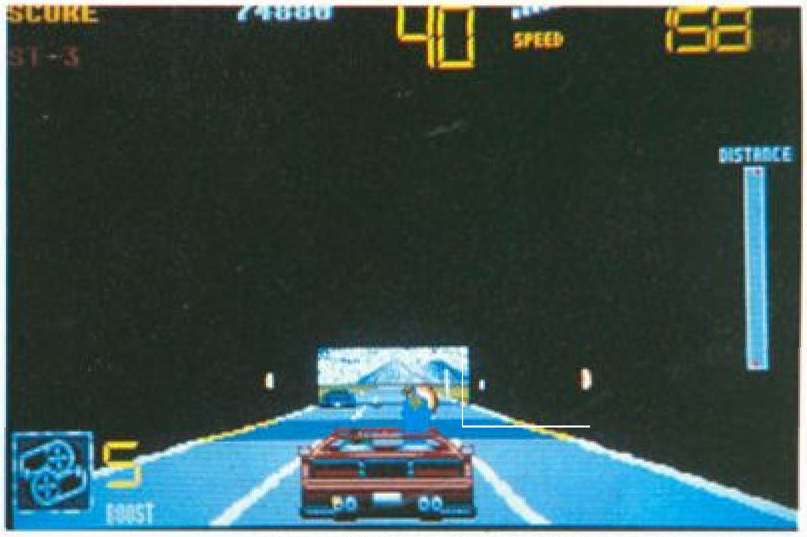
8 Bit versions to follow in January



ON THE COAST

HIGH-POWERED ITEM :
ROCKET LAUNCHER
6 SHOTS.

Nancy at Chase HQ describes the van in which the next criminal can be found. Some hefty disk swapping involved here.



Fortunately, the tunnel proves to be clear, and your partner can deal his deadly leaden law! You've got plenty of Turbo Boost left, so get cracking.''''''''''''''''''''s

Once you've plugged the baddies' car/van/truck a couple of times, the SCI helicopter will emerge overhead and parachute down a rocket-launcher. By driving underneath the chopper, you can collect the rocket launcher and use the six rockets to bring your foe to a more rapid halt.

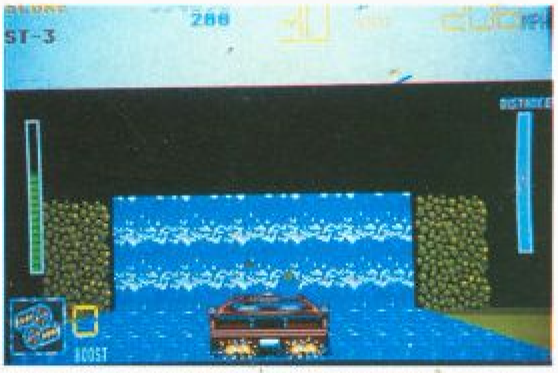
Inevitably once each crook has been arrested, he will profess his innocence of the kidnapping and squeal on a bigger crime boss. Nancy back at HQ will then point you in the right direction to apprehend the next speeding crook.

SCI comes on two disks, and there's a fair amount of swapping to be done inbetween stages, but the music keeps on playing, and the momentum isn't broken down too badly.

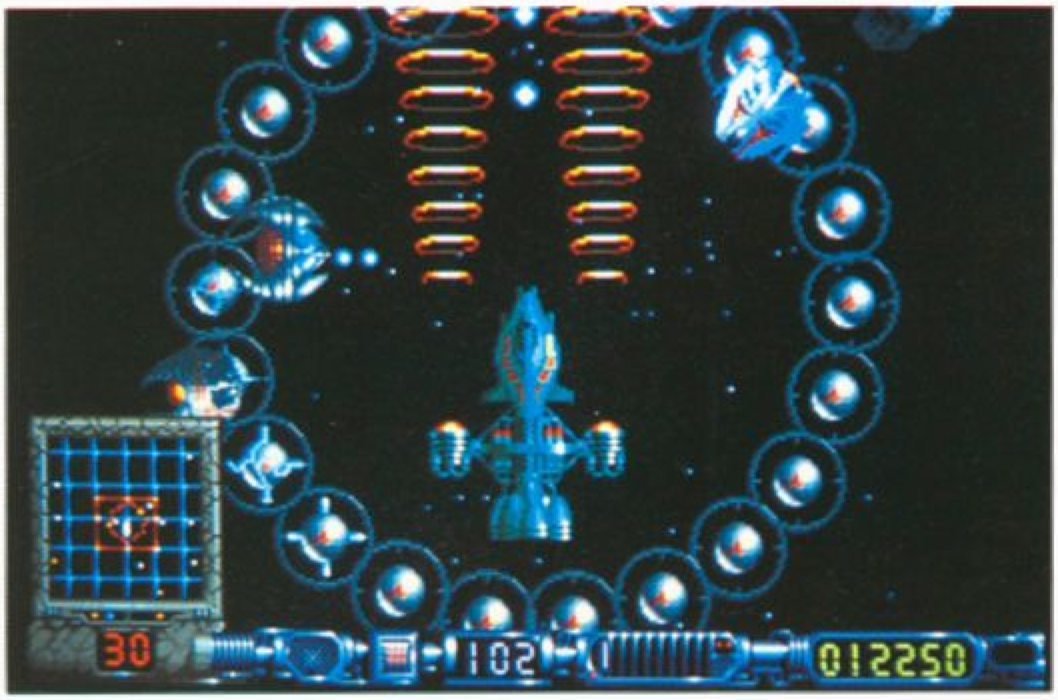
The action is fast, but the game in the first round is a bit easy. With only a couple of decent attempts, you can get pretty much all the way through.

If you like your games reasonably simple, but with lots of blasting and plenty of shouting at the screen, SCI could keep you happy for some time.

● Jim Douglas



Your prey has plunged through the waterfall, and you must bravely follow. Better hope the tunnel is clear...



Awesome firepower is at your disposal when confronted by the ungodly

AWESOME

Pygnosis go beyond the final frontier

The plot of *Awesome* has you and the crew of the Elapidae arriving for a spot of trading in the Octarian system, only to find it's scheduled for obliteration by the Homikahn and their dreaded Promethean cannon. In true gameplay tradition, this apparently serves as a convenient excuse to destroy anything in your path while making your escape.

This isn't as easy as it sounds, because fuel is both a rare and expensive commodity. It can only be obtained by fulfilling contracts, missions and, should the opportunity arise, raiding convoys.

Most sections of the game are seen from directly above and use a rotational scrolling technique akin to *Rotox* but far smoother and in an almost infinite number of directions. The controls take a while to get used to and at times the action becomes just a bit too hectic, this is mainly due to the large size of your ship and could have been rectified if all the screen had been used.

Arrival at any planetary destination changes the view to a 3-D perspective. Here you must eliminate a Space Serpent before getting to a landing site. This part moves extremely fast and looks good but is rather hard to play.

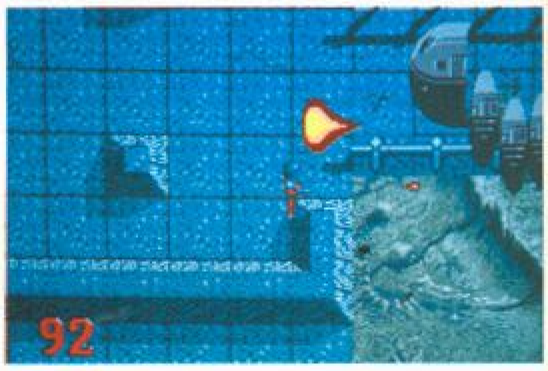
Once past the serpent, you have a time limit in which you must find the landing pad. This, along with the next section, reverts to the the original overhead view and is important because the number of meanies you destroy here affect the oxygen supply you have when finally searching for the entrance.

Inside you have the option to buy weapons (which range from Sonic Mining Lasers to Wide-Beam Plasma Cannons) and sell any cargo you have acquired, demand varies so you should look for a good deal.

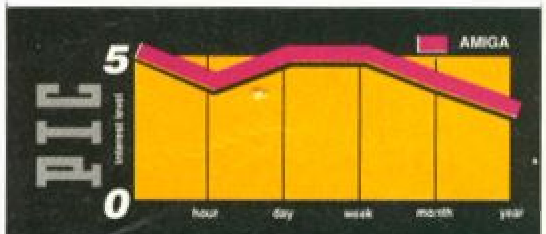
Once down, you can access a Navcom terminal, whereupon you are presented with a view of the solar system. Here you must decide whether to leave now (and save money on hotel bills) or wait until the orbits bring your target planet closer, a little brain power is required here as without careful planning you could find yourself stuck on a planet with no way to get off.

With eight planets each with its own theme, Aquoss (water), Morb (dead),Volcurn (Lava) etc., the game provides a long term challenge. The graphics really do impress, with a wide variety of colourful, well shaded sprites which, along with the smooth scrolling, make the game visually very attractive. The sound, on the other hand, is a little weak in comparison and although there are some good tunes they're not as good as *Beast 1*. There aren't enough spot effects either. Minor niggles aside, Awesome proves to be one of Pygnosis's strongest games yet, but at £35 a go it's not cheap, though the company are still pushing their new definition of the word 'free' with the bundled T-shirt.

● **Khalid Howlader**



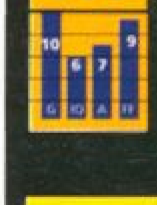
Oops!



The slick intro and good graphics instantly impress but then your interest suffers while getting used to the controls. It then builds as the wide variety of features enhance the gameplay,and is sustained as you progress further discovering more, previously unseen extras, such as bonus levels.

ACE RATING

900



AMIGA

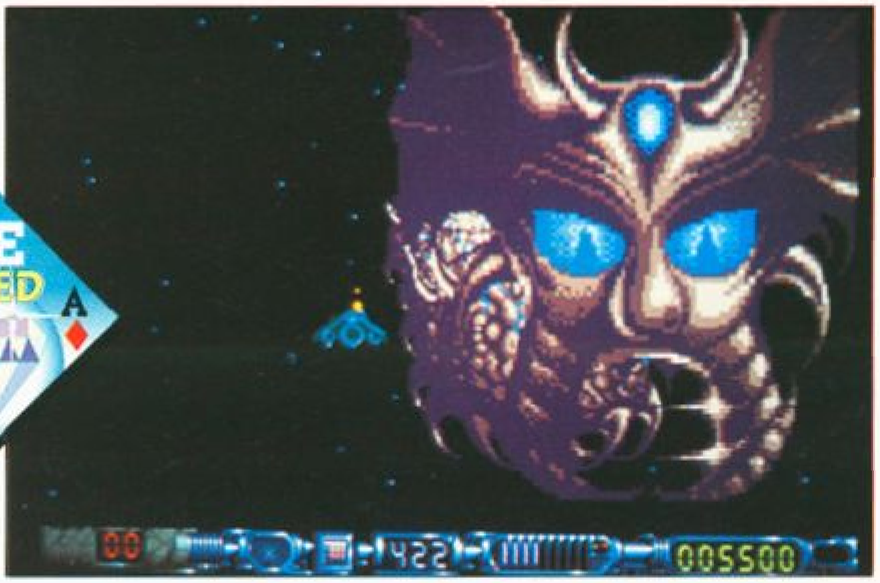
With well designed sprites Graphics and the smooth Rotational Scrolling it really impresses, the 3-D section moves so fast it wouldn't look out of place in your local arcade. You'll be stunned by the intro sequence, and if you thought Beast 2's was good Awesome's will take your breath away.As usual there is a lot of disk accessing which proves annoying,but if you possess a second drive or a memory expansion you'll suffer less.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA £34.95 OUT NOW

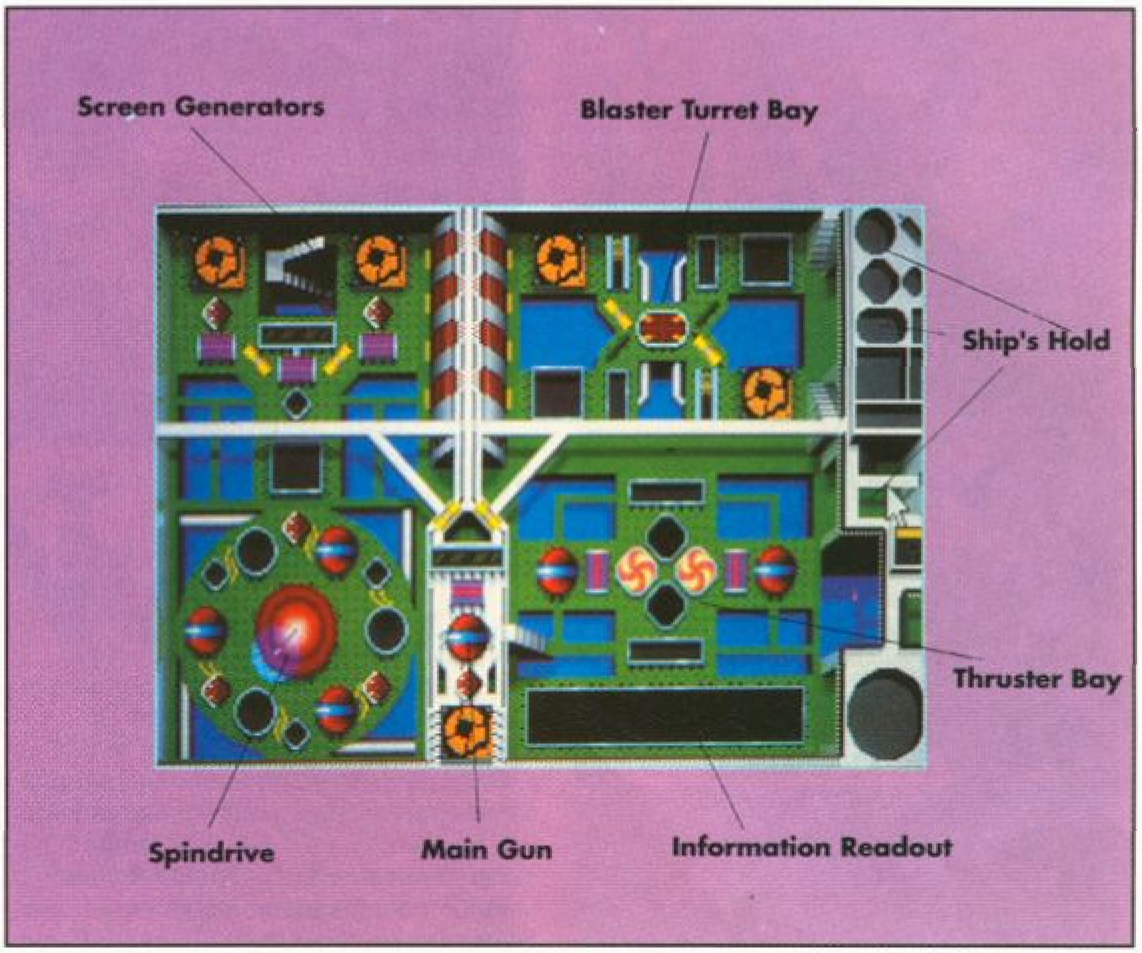
No other versions planned

Big, bad, and beautiful sprites in the true Psygnosis tradition



LIGHTSPEED

With the excellent *Elite Plus* ready for release, Microprose launch another polygon-driven space exploration game. Why?



As a result of rampant over-consumerism and careless global littering, Earth has been turned into an uninhabitable wasteland and mankind, like some billion-strong bunch of tourists, must find a new home in space. Your mission as captain of a Trailblazer probe is to chug around the galaxy locating suitable worlds on which the massive Cognestoga ships can deposit their cargo of humans.

Needless to say, finding a suitable planet is far from easy. Before you get the slightest whiff of a suitable organic-based oxygenated world with a decent temperature, there's a lot of business to take care of – for while humans require a precise set of conditions in which to survive, there are alien races capable of living virtually anywhere. As a result, there's no shortage of bug-eyed creatures with funny names to encounter.

You begin the game in the Trailblazer in a nondescript part of the universe. The Navigation Starmap shows your current location in your star cluster. Clicking the fire button will cycle the Starmap's inbuilt direction device through each set of worlds in turn offering information on each.

Having selected a world within range, you can Spindrive your way there (see panel) and, assuming you don't encounter anything hostile en route, you'll pop out at your destination after only a couple of seconds.

It's likely that when you emerge from Spindrive, an alien craft will be present. By launching a probe, communications can be opened with the aliens via a translator in the lower half of the screen.

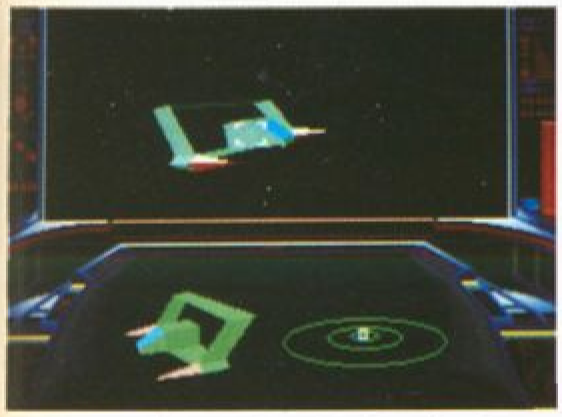
Different alien races have varying dispositions from the sneaky Broodmasters who endeavour to enlist your help in fighting their enemies to the highly developed Fel, who are co-operative and unkeen to enter into combat. Your alliances with alien races are extremely important to the greater success of your mission.

Should a world be uninhabitable, it may be worth despatching one of your three mining colonies and claiming the planet's resources for trade or to help support a fledgling world elsewhere.

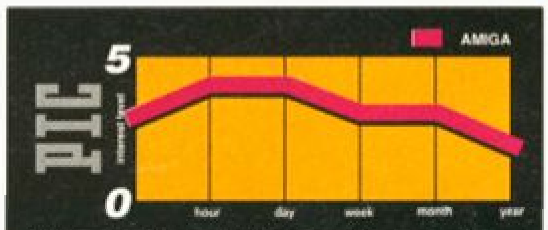
Aside from the trading and exploration side which actually work quite well, *Lightspeed* offers 3D polygon combat and short-range flight sections which, frankly, are pretty dull. Alien ships fly around the Trailblazer firing away and you can either blast them with your main gun or launch a more manoeuverable fighter ship to fight back. While the coding is perfectly competent, this particular side of the scenario adds nothing to the game – there are far superior 3D space-flight games available (*Elite Plus*, for example) and this particular bit of added interest lacks...well, interest.

Lightspeed, I venture to suggest, would have been far more enjoyable as an all-out trading/exploration/strategy game, completely doing away with the unspecial 3D sections and devoting more attention to the potential of the trading elements and world development.

● **Jim Douglas**



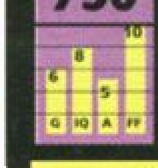
None too swift space combat tends to detract from the rather interesting and depthy space trading.



Lightspeed certainly has little instant appeal. The areas such as trading with the aliens, where the graphics really shine, are short-lived and the bulk of the game involves trudging around another really big universe. For those who are prepared to stick at it for a while, it certainly offers a lot of gameworld to play in.

ACE RATING

750



AMIGA

Even on a fast PC with the optimum level of detail selected, *Lightspeed's* 3D fails to impress. The graphics for both the engine-room and the trading sections, however are excellent, with animations lending some realism to the myriad alien creatures.

RELEASE DETAILS

PC	£24.99	OUT NOW

No other versions planned

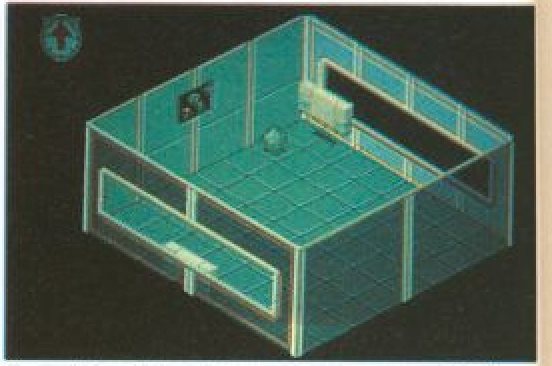
FLUFFY DICE

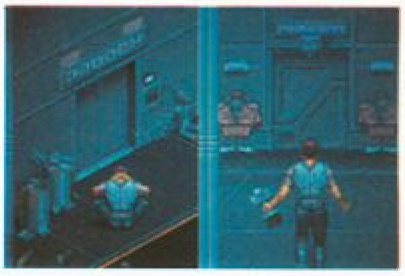
Your Trailblazer ship is initially reasonably equipped but a long way short of perfect. A visit to the Engine Room will reveal that there are a lot of gaps for extra components and those resident are the most basic models.

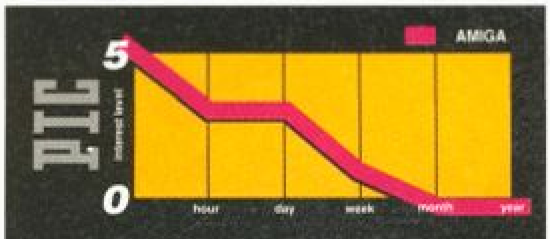
Alien nations will often have reached a more advanced level of technology than Earth. As a result, you can buy (for a price) enhanced components from your ship. Better gun components will increase the fire rate and damage potential of your shots. Enhanced turbines will increase thrust capabilities etc. You can also trade the less vital pieces of machinery for fuel if you get really desperate.

BOTICS

Bat 'n' ball fun with a robotic twist from KRISALIS


The easiest court type. Just you, your opponent and a ball.

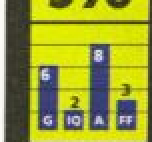

For the winner, the chance to play again. For the loser... nothing!



A very entertaining intro sequence - indeed, the presentation is excellent all round. But it's diffcult to become even moderately proficient at the game, and its simplicity actually works against it in this context - there just isn't enough in the game to make you want to come back and keep practising.

ACE RATING

596



AMIGA

The aesthetics are fine but the very serious flaws are in the gameplay. A game as simple as this should ideally be simple to pick up and play as well.
Unfortunately, it isn't.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£19.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£19.99	OUT NOW

No other versions planned

It is a time of media moguls. The Satellite TV Companies dominate, and by 2085 they beam 952 channels into every home. And, as now, Sport is the viewers' favourite. But the public demand for more aggressive and dangerous sports has made them impossible for humans to play.

Fortunately, this lack of suitable fleshy participants has provided a new growth area for the Robotics industry, which was previously in a slump due to the saturation of the Industrial market. Prodex 4 have invested 200 million Euro Dollars perfecting the sport of BOTICS.

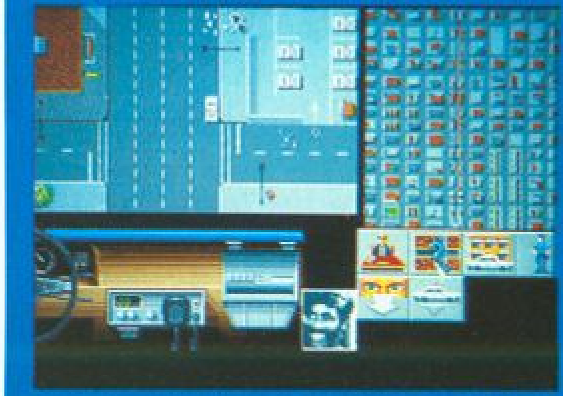
Each game consists of a series of matches played on a square walled court. Two 'droids knock a metal ball back and forth trying to score in each other's goal. Each 'droid can energise itself to power a shot towards the other player. But do this wisely - overuse will cause damage to your 'droid and it may eventually explode! Each player can exercise the option to take 'time out' during games for repairs. Later courts include walls that appear and block off your half of the court. There a five difficulties of opponents and five ball types.

The problem with *Botics* is that it's a simple idea that's been over-worked. The 3D courts are great to look at but very tough to play in because it's not easy working out where to position your bat. To get proficient is going to take quite a bit of practice, and there just isn't enough in the game to encourage you make that effort.

● **David Upchurch**

HILL STREET BLUES

Can you take the heat on the beat? Find out in KRISALIS' forthcoming tie-in with the famous cop TV show

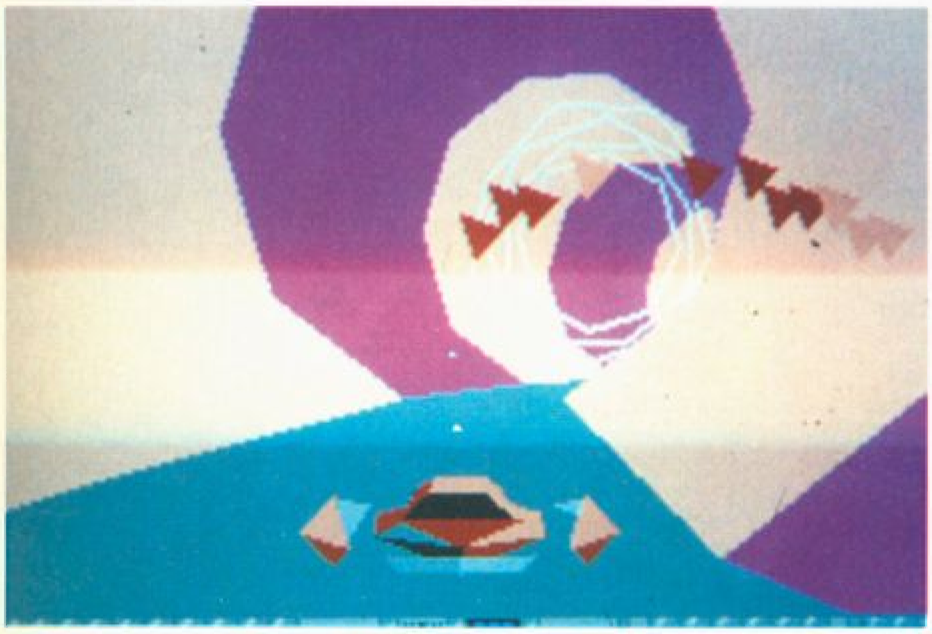

Getting your officers from A to B couldn't be easier. Call up the map (shown top right), click on a location then click on the relevant icon on the control panel. You can make 'em walk the streets or let 'em rest their feet in a patrol car (as long as they bring you back a doughnut)!

It's refreshing to see a novel approach to licensed games. In the hands of the less imaginative, *Hill Street Blues* could so easily have been a cops 'n' robbers shoot-'em-up, which would be not only been dull and unoriginal but also totally inappropriate to the mood and themes of the TV show. Instead Krisalis have gone for a resources management strategy game with strong similarities to *Sim City*.

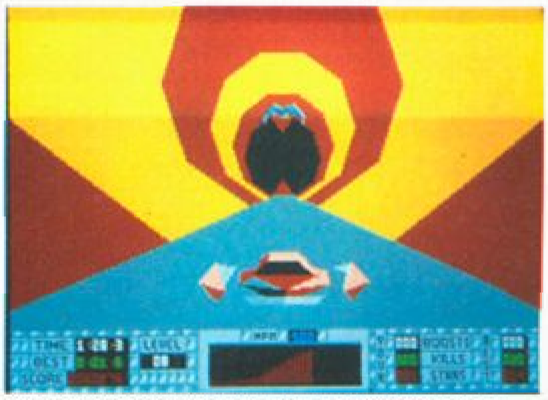
You take on the job of Captain Frank Furillo, with the weighty responsibility of keeping down the crime rate in the Hill Street precinct whilst trying to keep to your budget and maintaining *station morale* and police popularity. As crime reports come in you have to assign one of your eight officers to deal with it. For serious trouble you can always call in the SWAT team - but don't over react! Remember, Joe Public doesn't like being stuck in a traffic jam because the SWAT team have cordoned off a block while looking for a suspected pickpocket! Perform well for long enough and a promotion could be in the offing.

Krisalis Software have been working on the game for the last 8 months, aiming for release in Spring. Most of this time had been spent on getting the city to 'work'. There are over 600 citizens who you can watch walking and driving around the city, going to work or the shops and generally living their lives. The level of detail is very clever - cars pause at traffic lights or level crossings, for example. The game is played in accelerated real time, with the view of the city darkening as night draws in. The version we saw had quite a bit of work to be done on it yet, but so far it's looking great. We await the finished product with great interest.

● **David Upchurch**



On the approach to a junction in the tunnels. Use the map screen to determine which route is best.



Sending your Shockwave down the tunnel will clear everything in its path.

S.T.U.N. RUNNER

STUN Runner, the coin-op, was entertaining solely for the speed of its polygon graphics. How has this tricky conversion gone for Domark?

Playing *S.T.U.N. Runner* in the arcades was a strange affair. The speed of the graphics and the motor-bike style cabinet were enough to keep coins falling for a couple of hours. After a little while, however, it became apparent that *S.T.U.N. Runner* was decidedly light on the gameplay front. The aim - to collect stars which are lying on the floor of the Spread Tunnel Underground Network - not really being the sort of goal which hooks you immediately.

The home conversion is reasonably programmed, but inevitably crippled by the sluggishness of the machines. The problem is compounded by the fact that rather than opting for speedy wire-frame graphics, in an attempt to keep the game as close to the coin-op original as possible, time-consuming fill routines re used for every frame.

The result, of course, is that the frame rate is quite awful, jumping along in big steps. It looks more like a kiddies' flicker-book than 3D animation.

From the menu, you can opt to play in either easy, intermediate or hard tunnels. Controlling your Runner craft is simple. You can move it left or right, aim its laser up and down and fire. Twice during each wave (unless you collect enough green stars), you can send a Shockwave down the tunnel, which wipes out everything in its path.

What you can't do (and this is really the essence of the game) is directly affect the speed of your vehicle. Like a semi-intelligent car, your Runner craft will slow down or speed up in an appropriate manner to the bends, hills and straights it encounters. So the aim, and indeed the only way to get through each stage in time, is to position your craft in the tunnel in a way that will allow it to travel at the highest speed. Stay on the outside walls of the tunnel while going through corners, maximizing the effect of the centrifrugal force.

In the first stage, the green stars indicate the best route, but from there on in you've got to find your own way. Making a bad decision and taking a corner badly will cause the S.T.U.N. Runner to slow down severely. Along the way, boost pads will increase your speed way beyond its normal 500mph ceiling. These boosts only last a short time, however and they're no substitute for shrewd tunnel-positioning.

The deeper into the game you go, the the busier the tunnels become. Most craft can be blown up with your on-board lasers, but some are completely indestructible. They must simply be avoided.

The level of difficulty sometimes a bit incongruous with the stage you have selected. Many of the intermediate levels seem a lot easier than the later levels on the "Easy" stage. The difficulty is unfortunately governed entirely by the time limit. No amount of bashing and crashing will cause your Runner to conk out. Instead it just scrapes along the walls.

Domark's attempt at *S.T.U.N. Runner*, aside from the frame-rate, is a perfectly decent conversion of a rather uninspiring arcade game. If you went absolutely bonkers over the original, it's worth a look. Otherwise, don't bother.

● **Jim Douglas**

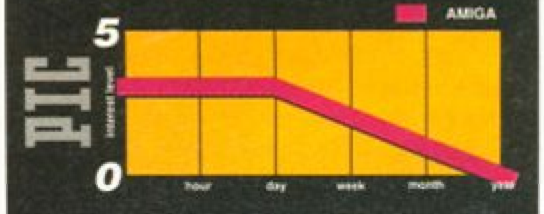
Pounding the beat. Along the way you can get information on any citizen you see by clicking on them.

ACE PREPLAY

● Interesting and original game concept ● Very easy to control ● City watching is quite a laugh	● Game style won't appeal to all, although it's probably correctly angled for fans of the show. ● Graphics jerky (due to the need for speed)

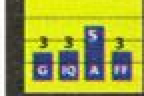
Release Details

AMIGA	TBA	Early '91
ATARI ST	TBA	Early '91
IBM PC	TBA	Early '91



Had the home machines been capable of the speedy number crunching like the coin-op, *S.T.U.N. Runner* would have been an entertaining game, but right from the outset, its speed is a real let-down. There really isn't much to do. Your control over the ship is limited too. Indeed, the only thing the arcade version had in it's favour was the speed, so *S.T.U.N. Runner* was on a sticky wicket from the very start.

ACE RATING
480



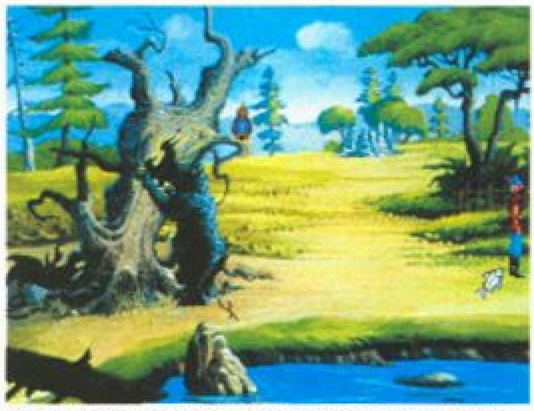
AMIGA

Even the Amiga isn't capable of performing well under so much polygon-pressure. And while all of the coin-op elements have been included, the game's appeal has been sapped by the snail-like graphics. It does offer a few minutes of entertainment as you work out your optimimum route for each stage, but from ther on, it goes downhill rapidly. The Audio is okay, with decent speech offering encouragement along the way. But on the whole, *S.T.U.N. Runner* is a disappointing release.

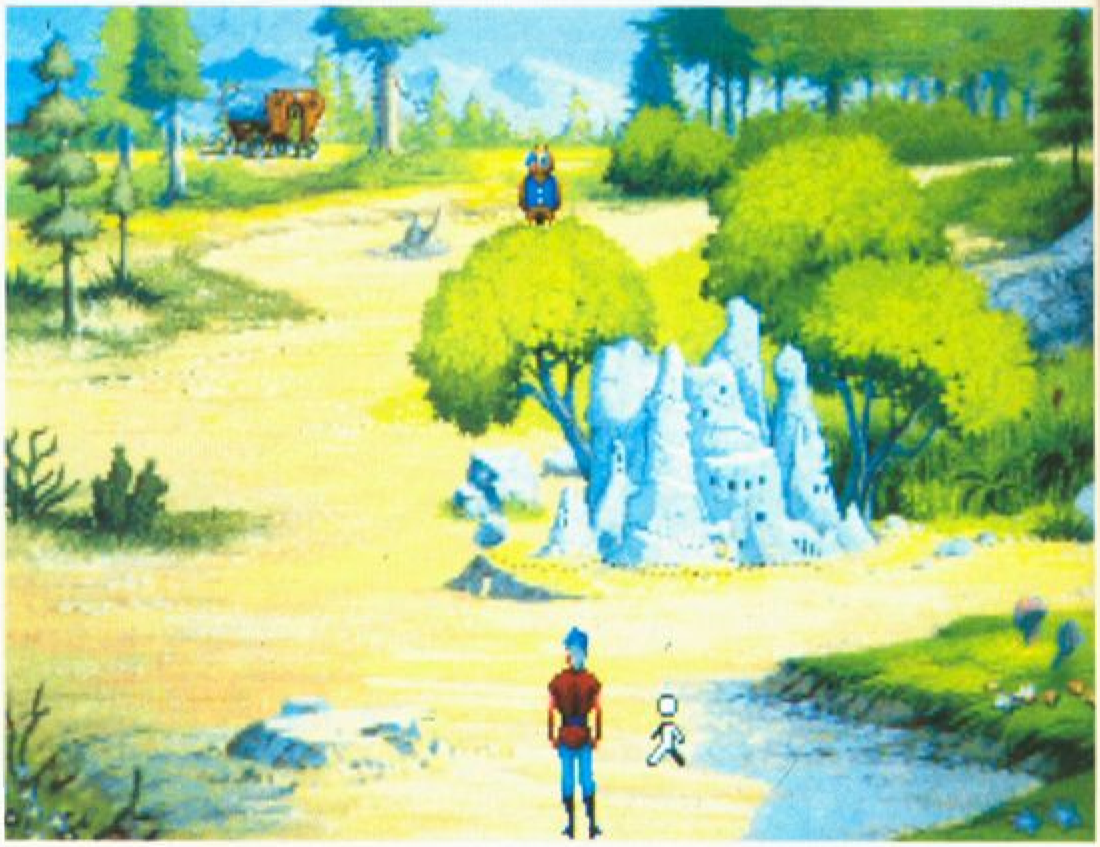
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£29.99	OUT NOW
SPECTRUM	£9.99cs/£14.99dk	OUT NOW
AMSTRAD CPC	£9.99cs/£14.99dk	OUT NOW
C64	£9.99cs/£14.99dk	OUT NOW

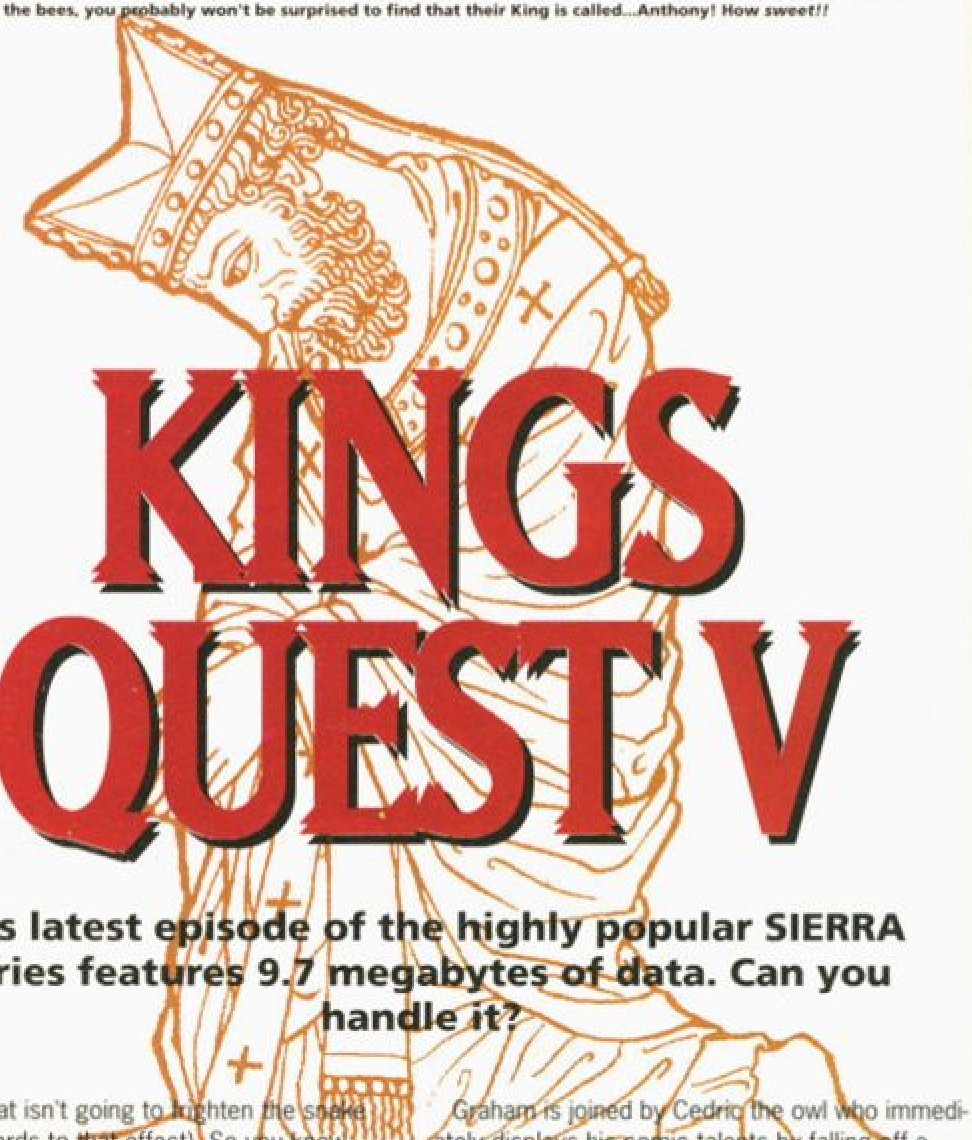
No other versions planned



That bad bear is molesting those poor bees. Luckily, you've picked up a smell fish in another location. Is that the answer?



Yet another gorgeous scene. You probably can't see it in this screenshot, but that ant-hill is alive with scurrying ants. And after the affair with the bees, you probably won't be surprised to find that their King is called...Anthony! How *sweet!!*



KINGS QUEST V

This latest episode of the highly popular SIERRA series features 9.7 megabytes of data. Can you handle it?

Ahe *King's Quest* series is one of the most popular of Sierra's 'graphic adventures' and, although the games don't seem to follow any particular narrative path, this latest creation is firmly in the *KQ* tradition with astonishing graphics, loads of puzzles, and a whopping great dose of American schmaltz. If Roberta Williams carries on writing games like this, she's sure to earn a place in the All-Time Hall of Yuk...but more of that anon.

Just in case you haven't sampled these games before, what you see has never been closer to what you get. The graphics practically ARE the game: beautiful fantasy locations are loaded from disk (yawn, unless you've got a hard drive) and your little animated figure prances about the screen under your direction.

In previous *KQ's*, this graphic presentation has been marred by the – ugh – necessity to actually type in a few words of English as in the old style adventures, but *KQV* has finally done away with that and replaced the typing with an icon bar across the top of the screen. Since this isn't displayed by default, you have to summon it with a keypress and then toggle along the icon list until you get the one you want.

The icons at your command are pretty basic LOOK, TALK, and USE-type options but these are all you'll need to steer King Graham of Daventry (yup, the yuk starts here) about his kingdom in search of his castle, kidnapped by the wicked magician Mordack.

That's because, despite the 256 colour VGA glorioso display, the game behind the graphics is about as trenchant as vintage sago. As you wander from pretty scene to pretty scene, you encounter various characters or situations that, if handled in the right way, can aid you in your quest. For the most part, this process involves finding objects and then using them in the right context. To make things easier, the program doesn't allow you to use objects in inappropriate circumstances, so you always know whether you've got it wrong. Text messages also do their best to suggest, by implication, what you should be doing. For example, when confronted at the beginning of the game by a hostile snake, ineffective actions are greeted by a message advising you that 'That isn't going to frighten the snake away' (or words to that effect). So you know you've got to find something to put the fear of God into the beast.

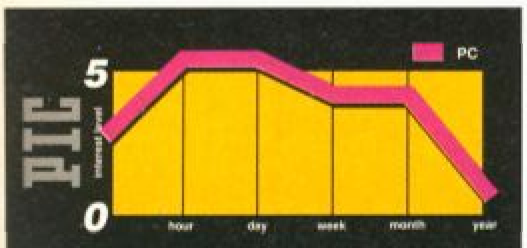
YUK!

Previous *KQ*'s have shared a tendency to cloying cuteness in their scenarios, and *KQ5* is not only no exception, but seems bent on taking this tendency to new extremes.

First, you've got your chief character – King Graham of Daventry. This sounds suspiciously like an attempt to parody Lord British of Britannia from the Ultima series, but I'm sure Sierra would never stoop so low. For those of us who know the real Daventry, however, it's a bit of a joke.

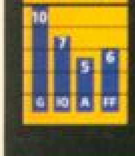
Graham is joined by Cedric the owl who immediately displays his comic talents by falling off a branch while talking to you. Ho ho ho...what a silly owl!

In the scenes that follow, as Graham and Cedric pootle around Daventry, they are confronted by numerous personages who are in every way as bland as themselves (check out the screenshot of Queen Beetrice for a typical example). All this is very well, and – on past experience – to be expected from a game by Roberta Williams, who seems to delight in putting cutesy touches in her games (remember the animation sequence when Rosella fell down the stairs?), but there has to be a limit. Just as game design guru Chris Crawford argues that there is a threshold of realism in



Some initial reservations about the degree of slushy cuteness may deter hard-hearted gamesters, but the graphic excellence of the game soon enthralls. After a couple of hours, the challenges have mounted up and several characters have set you tasks – finding out which order to tackle them in becomes part of the growing challenge. And there's a lot here to keep you going...

ACE RATING
850



IBM PC

Sets new standards for data requirements with a mind-blowing 9.7mbytes of hard disk storage required. Yes, you can play from the 9 high density floppies, but would you really want to? Each scene requires a disk access and only a hard drive can really keep things moving. Furthermore, the graphic detail cries out for VGA and, of course, at least a fast 286 to keep the animation rate up. Common sound boards supported. HD drives required for installation.

RELEASE DETAILS

ATARI ST	£TBA	MARCH
IBM PC EGA	£39.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC VGA	£44.99	OUT NOW
CD-ROM	£44.99	TBA
AMIGA	£TBA	FEB

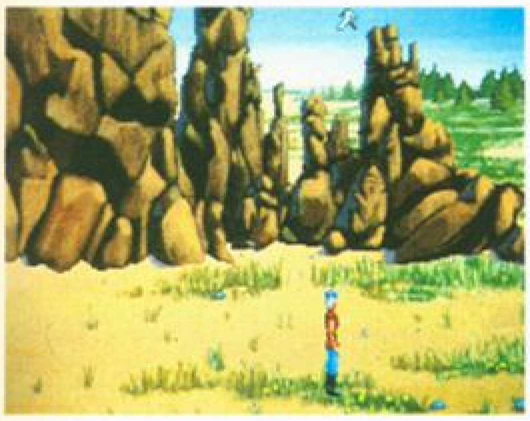
No other versions planned

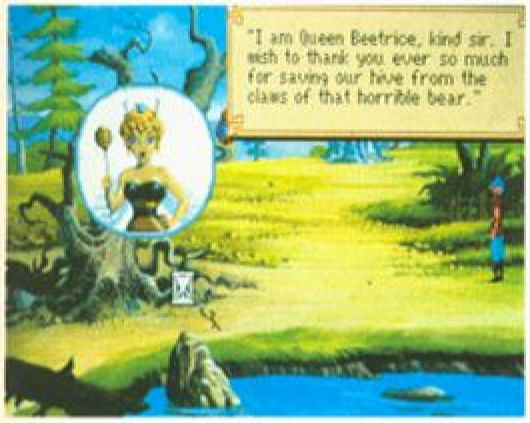
WOT? NO WORDS?

Sierra's icon command system for KQ5 is a bit of a disappointment. First, you have to call up the idon bar whenever you need it. Second, it always comes up with the first icon selected, and not with the last one used, so you have to toggle along the bar for the one you need. There are also needlessly inefficient combinations of cursor, mouse, and keyboard used in command selection.

Best way to play KQ5 is with mouse AND keyboard, using the mouse for directions and the keyboard for toggling commands. But you can't help feeling that Sierra could have produced a slicker interface for this new game.

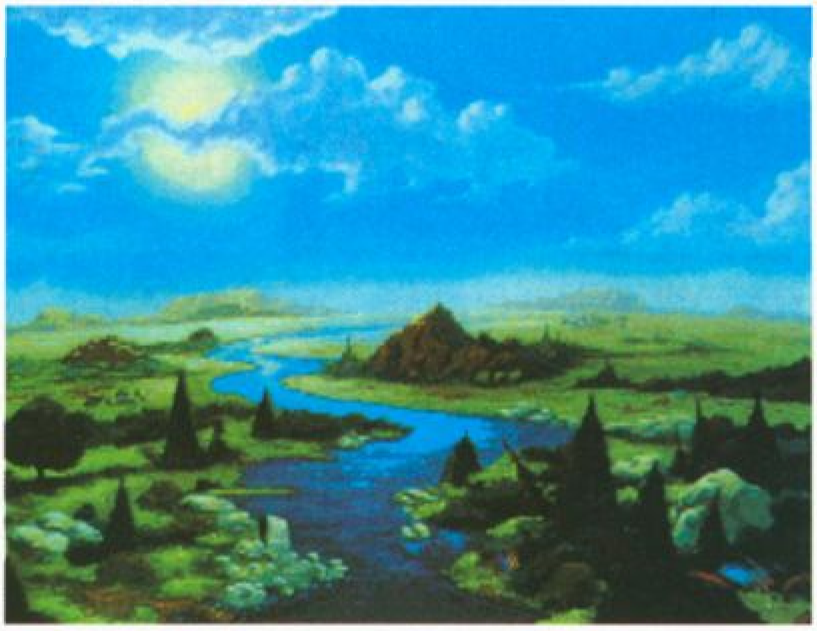
Cedric is always on hand to warn you about potentially dangerous situations. He warned you not to enter this desert, but you didn't listen, did you? Most of the desert consists of repeating, featureless locations and acts as an effective boundary to the map



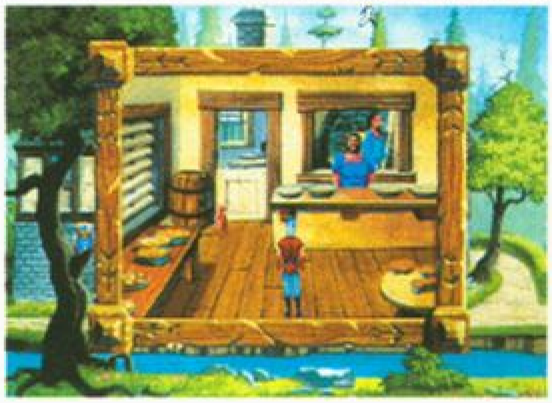


"I am Queen Beetrice, kind sir. I wish to thank you ever so much for saving our hive from the claws of that horrible bear."

...Yes, that did the trick. The bear has left with the fish, and now Queen Beetrice (yukkkk!) rewards you with a honeycomb. Now, what can we use THAT for...?

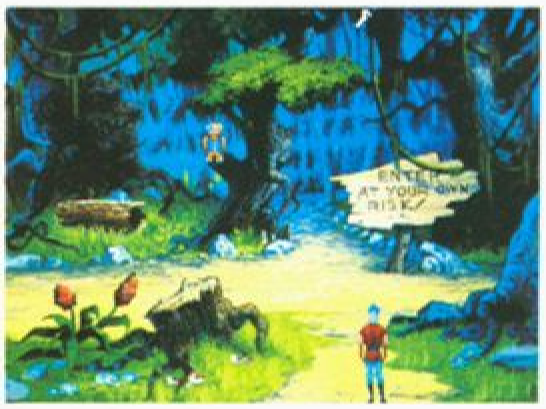


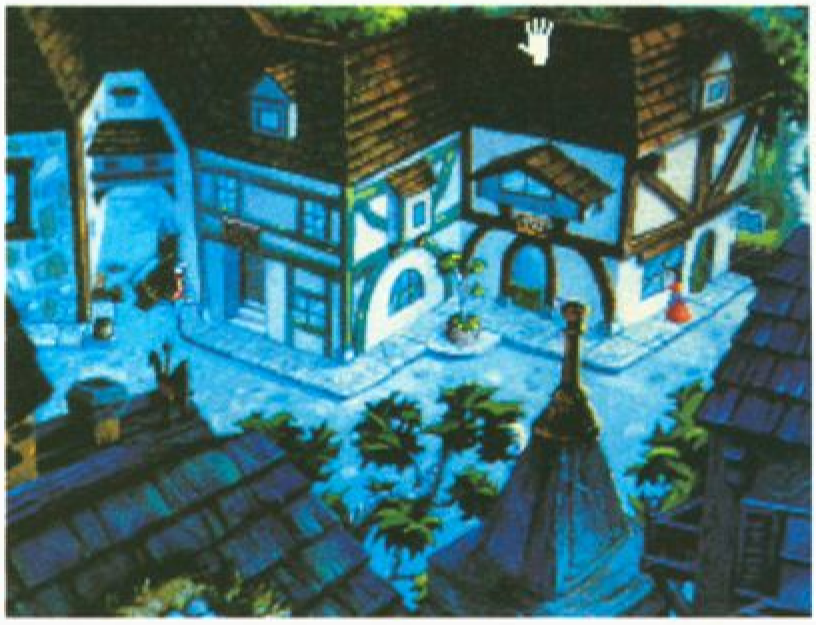
A typically superb screen from the lengthy intro sequence that sets the scene for new players



More evidence of the game's paternalistic attitude (or should that be maternalistic). The game designers wants you to be absolutely sure that you don't wander in here unprepared. Of course you do, and you get turned into a frog for your pains...

▼





the town is one of the first places you visit. As in Ultima games, you've got characters wandering about, but you can't converse with anyone except those in the shops. The latter usually alert you either to items you need or possible sub-plots that will enable you to get them...

games, so I'd argue that there's a threshold of cute. Just the right amount warms the cockles of your heart – overstep the mark and it's time for the barf bag.

KQ5 hovers dangerously on this borderline. Cedric's antics are followed up by some of the most sickly dialogue I've ever seen in a game. For example, in the bakers...

BAKER: Enjoy our custard pie!

KING GRAHAM: Oh! I'm sure I will!

Exit King Graham, and your's truly to the bathroom. Do we really have to sugar-coat our custard pies to this extent?

At the end of the day, however, *KQ5* survives as all simple games do by urging you onward to solve the next puzzle. What happens if I try the honeycomb on the snake? Nothing. but what if I return to the gnomes' clearing and offer it to them...or perhaps they'd prefer the pie? And isn't that such a *pretty* doll the little gnome-girl's got? And wasn't there a little girl in the villagey-willagey who wanted a doll for her own? It may be cute, but it's still horribly compelling.

In any other game, this degree of to-and-froing would be unbearable, but the graphic excellence of *KQ5* and the size of the challenge mix just enough salt in with the sugar to keep you lapping it up. Roberta Williams is rapidly carving herself a niche as the Barbara Cartland of games and, like most of BC's work, this is total, unashamed yuk...but I like it.

● **Steve Cooke**

ECO PHANTOMS

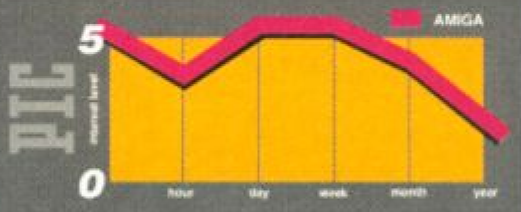
Save the Earth - again! - in SPLINTER VISION/ ELECTRONIC ZOO's exploration extravaganza

This is definitely NOT the homecoming you were expecting. Returning to Earth after six years in deep space you were hoping for a nice cup of tea and a chance to put your feet up, but Fate has rather different - and deadlier - plans in mind.

The Earth on your view screen is not the one you remember. Three huge domes bulge from it's pocked and ravaged surface, housing machinery designed to drain its once-bountiful resources - the ECO PHANTOMS have invaded. Having destroyed their own planetary system in a foolish nuclear war, these evil scavengers scour the Galaxy for fertile planets to plunder. With the giant flag-ship *Planet Drainer* they collect a planet's resources and transfer them to their home worlds in an attempt to rebuild them.

As you near Earth, an alien craft intercepts you and the ECO PHANTOM crew board your ship. While they search, you sneak aboard their ship and trap the enemy on your vessel. Your task ahead is clear: you must infiltrate and shut-down the three enemy domes. Only then can you attempt to destroy *Planet Drainer*, and reverse the devastation of your planet.

● **David Upchurch**



The excellent graphic style, reminiscent of Jules Verne, offers instant appeal. Then things start to get a little confusing! It takes a while to get a handle on what's going on and making a map is absolutely essential. Once you get over the slightly high learning curve, you'll find you've got a long-lasting and enjoyable quest ahead.

ACE RATING
836

G	IQ	A	FF
8	7	7	8

AMIGA

The graphics are very attractive, though the sound is largely functional. The icons are a bit small and fiddly, especially in the thick of battle. There's lots to see and do, perhaps a little too much initially. You've got to be prepared to put something in at the beginning to get something out later. A great game for the arcade adventurer whose interests tend towards the latter.

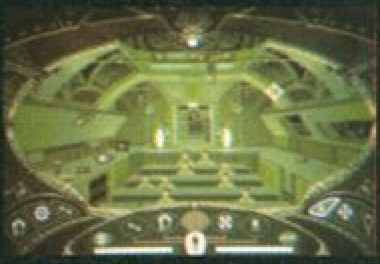
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	IMMINENT
ATARI ST	£24.99	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.99	IMMINENT

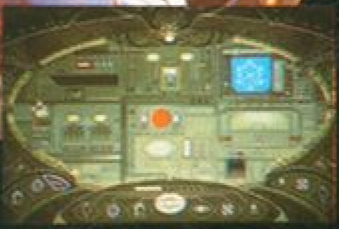
No other versions planned

THE CURSOR. Controlled by the mouse. All game interaction is carried out by clicking on icons. Move the cursor towards the top of the Main View and click the left mouse button to move your ship forward down the trench (which is depicted in a similar way to *Dungeon Master*, but smoother). Move the cursor to the sides of the Main View and click to rotate the ship. Clicking the right button will fire a low-powered laser bolt strong enough to destroy most minor installations.

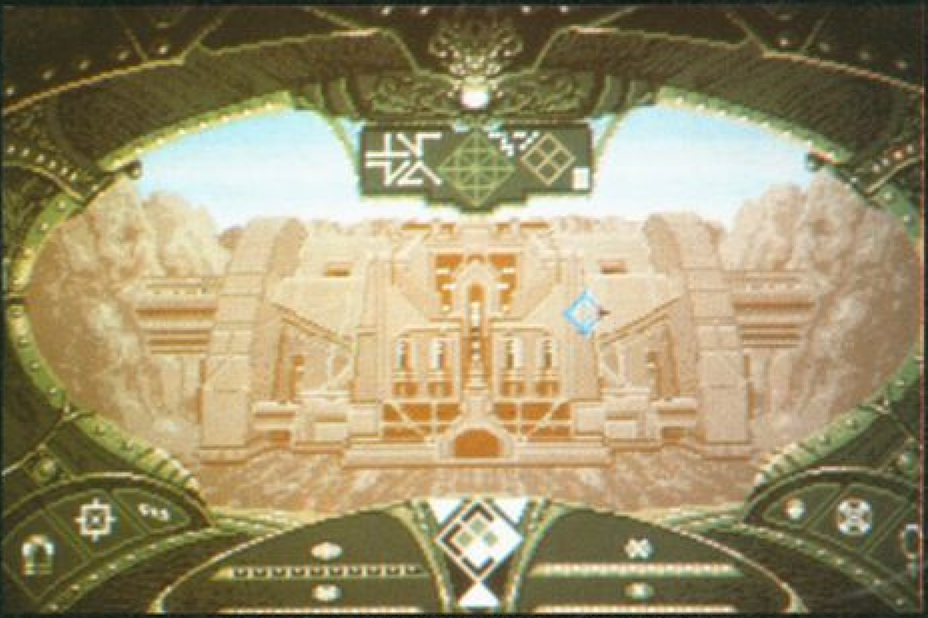
THE COMMUNICATOR. When you find an alien building you must transmit the correct entrance code to be allowed to send a robot in and search. Each code is made up of a combination of the four icons on the left, which you can select by clicking on them. Your selections are shown on the diamond in the centre. Send the wrong code or take too long and your true identity will be revealed - prepare for battle!



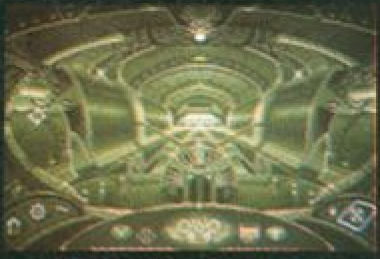
THE PASSENGER HOLD. This is where the rescued humans live. You must keep them fed and watered. In return they'll help you run the ship, when you've assigned them to other areas.



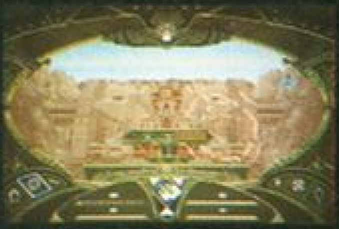
THE VIRUS LAB. Some gulleys are infested with deadly virus spheres which will swoop in and attack. If you don't shoot them quickly they will cling to the hull and start feeding off the machinery, causing the eventual failure of your ship. Here you can create antidote.



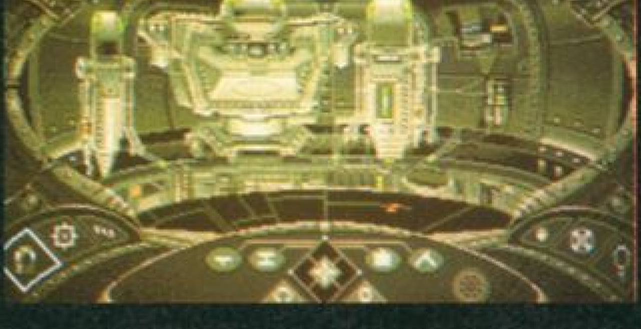
THE MAIN VIEW. Looking down one of the gulleys of the first dome in the Deserts of Africa. The other two domes are located in the Pacific and the North Pole.



THE ENGINE ROOM. The five machines here control various aspects of your ship's movement. You can adjust the speed of your ship using the throttles. However, keep the turbines going too fast for too long without oiling and they'll seize!



THE LASER CANNON. If you get an entrance code wrong then the building's automatic defences will start firing on you and you'll have to get tough. You have to find the building's weak points and shoot them out before your shields are gone.



THE STATUS PANEL. The central oval acts as a compass and also indicates possible directions of travel. The four bars around this oval indicate the state of various important factors in the ship, such as shield strength and level of virus infestation.

THE COLLECTOR. Destroying alien machines will cause them to leave behind spheres, which you can pick up. These spheres are beneficial in various ways, such as topping up your shields and even helping to control the weather in certain areas!

◄ **THE ROBOT CHAMBER.** You have four robots, each with varying abilities, that you can guide around buildings to retrieve supplies, find access codes to other buildings and finally lay explosives. Each is armed with a laser to protect them from alien guards.

SPORTS 4D

BOXING

"4D Sports Boxing is absolutely brilliant...the boxers move pretty much like their real-life counterparts ...Here goes. Ooooooof! (Crunch)." ZERO HERO 90%

"...This is the best game I have ever played..." -Don Mattrick, President of Distinctive Software Inc

"Seconds out...Round One! The crowd leap to their feet as the fighters rain down on each other...was that a stumble? YES! He's down...what a knock out. This is boxing at it's absolute best. What a brilliant fight"

"4D Sports Boxing is simply one of the best sports simulations around...Superb." -The One 90%

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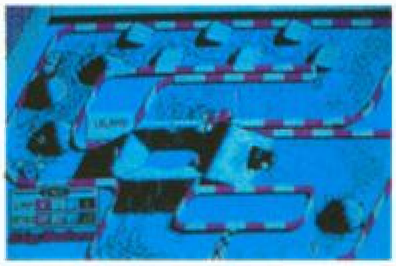
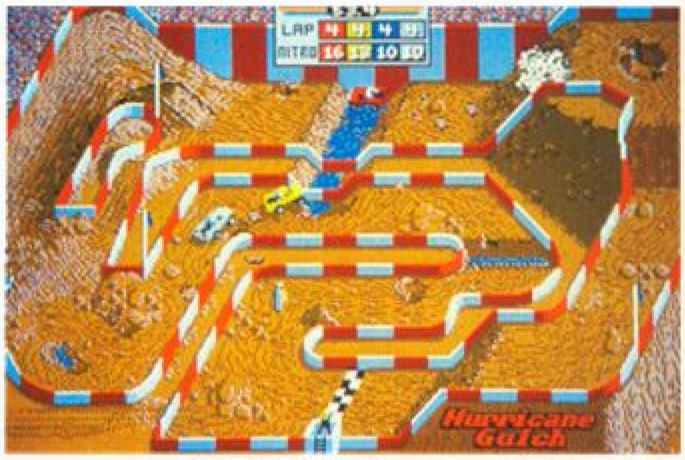
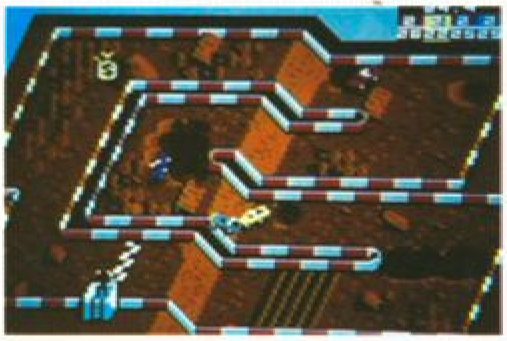
IVAN 'IRONMAN' STEWART'S SUPER OFF ROAD



IBM PC - The CGA graphics do the business well enough, but the bonuses can be a little hard to see.



AMIGA - With a blast like Johnny Fartpants from the exhaust, your red racer zooms forward.



C64 - Be the first to the money bag in the top left corner for more purchasing power later!

VIRGIN MASTERTRONIC's *'Ironman'* or DOMARK's *Badlands* - Which is King of the Road?

Who is Ivan Stewart? I've never heard of him! (Then read the box, you ignorant devil!) But if this game is an accurate representation of the sort of antics he gets up to, he certainly deserves the epithet 'Ironman'. These are not your usual high-speed gentlemen-of-the-road events - each is a gladiatorial struggle for survival on a rugged earth track. The trucks jostle and wrestle for first place whilst plunging into gravel pits, climbing steep slopes and ploughing through water-filled craters.

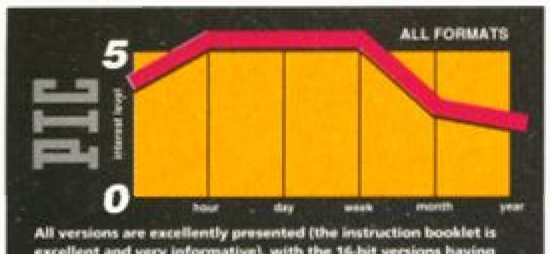
Your aim (and your friends') is to finish ahead of all the computer-controlled cars in a set of courses - fail and you lose one of your two credits. After each race you're awarded prize money, the amount depending on where you finished. This can be used to buy various upgrades which, for once, have a noticeable effect on your car's performance.

Control is simple: rotate left/right and accelerate. Each car is equipped with a limited number of Nitros, which can be kicked in at any time to give you that extra spurt of speed to take you into the lead or, if things are going badly, just back into the running. It's hugely satisfying using one at the last minute to blast you past your mate's car and over the finishing line!

● David Upchurch

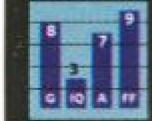
WHO IS THE 'IRONMAN'?

You may not know who Ivan Stewart is, but the Americans certainly do. Since 1971 he's built up an impressive record as one of the top drivers in the tough sport of Off-Road Racing. In 1983 Stewart joined the Toyota Factory Team and has competed for them ever since, driving off-road trucks in stadium races (as depicted in the game), as well as stamina-sapping 250-mile nonstop treks through the deserts of Southwest USA and Mexico. It was his repeated success in these marathon tests of endurance that earned him his nickname 'Ironman'. Can you live up to his reputation?



All versions are excellently presented (the instruction booklet is excellent and very informative), with the 16-bit versions having all the attract and between-game screens of Leland's original coin-op. It couldn't be easier to pick up and play, but the tough opponents and courses pose a long-lasting challenge. The game sensibly introduces new tracks gradually so the urge to see what new ones are on offer isn't extinguished too soon. Add the excellent multiplayer option and you've got a smashing game you'll still be loading in a year's time.

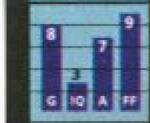
ACE RATING **835**



AMIGA

Graphics look identical to the coin-op's, although they're slightly slower (but not seriously so). The tunes get a little grating, but mercifully you're able to turn them off and just have the okay-ish sound effects. Technically stunning it isn't, but great fun it is, especially with two friends in tow.

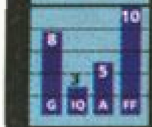
ACE RATING **835**



ATARI ST

Identical in every respect to the Amiga conversion, except (funny old world that it is) the tunes are actually less irritating!

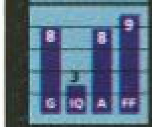
ACE RATING **870**



IBM PC

In VGA the graphics are, again, arcade perfect, and don't suffer too much in the E/CGA either. Even a 8 MHz PC is noticeably faster than ST and Amiga, which improves the (already excellent) playability no end. A marvellous game that helps fill the huge gap in the PC market for straight-forward FUN titles.

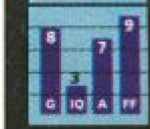
ACE RATING **831**



C64

The most attractive of the 8-bit versions, although the pseudo-3D effect is marred by the car sprites occasionally overlapping the roadside fences. However the all-important fun gameplay is here - in buckets!

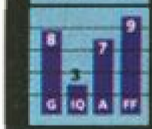
ACE RATING **826**



AMSTRAD CPC

Graphics are excellent, using the 4-colour mode to good effect with each car being easily distinguishable. The tunes are very good for a CPC, although they slow noticeably during the game. Despite the fact that only two humans can play simultaneously and the game runs a little slowly, the Fun Factor remains very high.

ACE RATING **830**

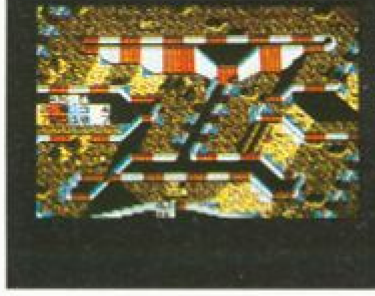


SPECTRUM

Track graphics are colourful, but the cars are monochrome. Like the CPC, only two humans can play simultaneously. The player cars are distinguished by black and white flags waving from their aerials, which can lead to slight confusion when in a road ruck.

RELEASE DETAILS

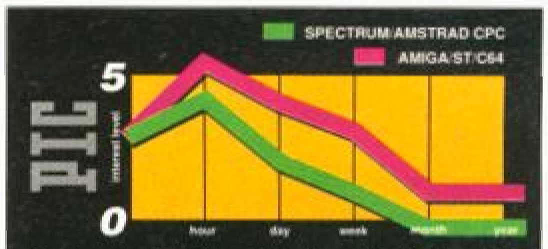
AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99	OUT NOW
C64	£10.99cs/£14.99dk	OUT NOW
AMSTRAD CPC	£10.99cs/£14.99dk	OUT NOW
SPECTRUM	£10.99cs/$14.99dk	OUT NOW



SPECTRUM - The monochrome cars can be hard to tell apart at times.

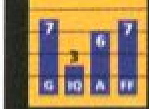
GAME SPECS

	'IRONMAN'	BADLANDS
Number Of Vehicles On Track	4 - Up to 3 (2 on Spectrum and CPC) can be human controlled.	3 - Up to 2 can be human controlled.
Number Of Tracks	8 - The bumps, pits, jumps and ditches make for lots of rough 'n' tumble action. The different tracks are not played directly one after another - you may play two tracks then play the first again, but driving in the opposite direction - so it'll be some time before you're good enough to see them all.	8 - Pretty straight forward, just scoot round as fast as possible. Occasional hazards, such as oil slicks, and spikes, add danger. Some tracks are animated, with opening and closing short-cut gates, snipers firing at you from towers and other goodies. Later you can bump into trackside objects to cause further mayhem (i.e. knock over water towers to make the track slippy). The different tracks are played one after another, so it won't be long before you've seen all the variations.
Upgrades	● Nitros - Vital for boosting you to the front when lagging. ● Tires - Reduce skidding and improve cornering. ● Shocks - Reduce bounce and improve ground contact. ● Acceleration - Reduces time to get to top speed. ● Top Speed - Increases maximum speed possible. You can have up to 99 Nitros. The rest of the upgrades have five possible 'levels' of effectiveness. One of your two credits can be traded in for $200,000 to buy upgrades with.	● Missiles - Allow you to totally destroy other cars. ● Shields - Protect you from attack by other vehicles. ● Speed - Increases maximum speed possible. ● Turbos - Increase rate of acceleration. ● Tires - Improve road holding when cornering. ● Brakes - Help you reduce speed more quickly. You can have up to 99 Missiles and Shields. The rest of the upgrades have six possible 'levels' of effectiveness.



Mediocre presentation. The action holds your attention for a while and the weapons add much-needed spice, but on Speccy and CPC the poor graphics and slowness kill any addictiveness very quickly.

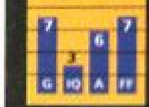
ACE RATING **780**



AMIGA

This is just a straight rehash of Atari's earlier *Super Sprint* with guns and seriously lacks the bounce 'n' bash fun aspect of Ironman. While it's well programmed and fun for a while (especially with a friend to shoot at), there nothing here to really grab your attention unless you're a committed fan of the genre.

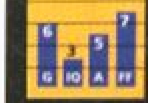
ACE RATING **780**



ATARI ST

Again, nothing new to report on the Atari front - identical to the Amiga.

ACE RATING **765**



C64

As with *Ironman*, this is the best 8-bit rendition of the game. Suitably fast, but the background graphics are a messy collage of pixels. Play-wise, the problems are the same as 16-bit machines.

BADLANDS

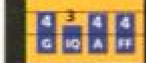
From the post-Apocalypse rubble they came - men and women so hard that they used barbed wire for dental floss. No more Mr Softy *Super Sprint* larks for them. They armoured their cars and mounted cannons on top and took up the dangerous and ruthless pastime of racing in the Badlands; the desolate ruins left after the nuclear conflict.

The bare bones of the game are identical to *Super Off Road*. You (and a friend) play on eight tracks. Finishing behind the computer drones loses you one of your two credits. Occasionally gold wrenches appear on the track and can be picked up by running over them. These can be used to buy upgrades between races.

Controls are the same as *Super Off Road*, except there are no Nitros, but this is compensated for by your roof-mounted cannon. Shooting another car slows them down and also makes them drop any wrenches they may have picked up, so you can nip in there and take them for yourself (ha!).

● **David Upchurch**

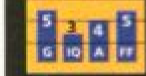
ACE RATING **656**



AMSTRAD CPC

By far the worst version. The background graphics are identical to the Spectrum's; very blocky and lacking any 3D effect (i.e. foreground buildings to travel behind). This might have been excusable had the game played okay, but it doesn't - everything is painfully slow. Avoid.

ACE RATING **689**

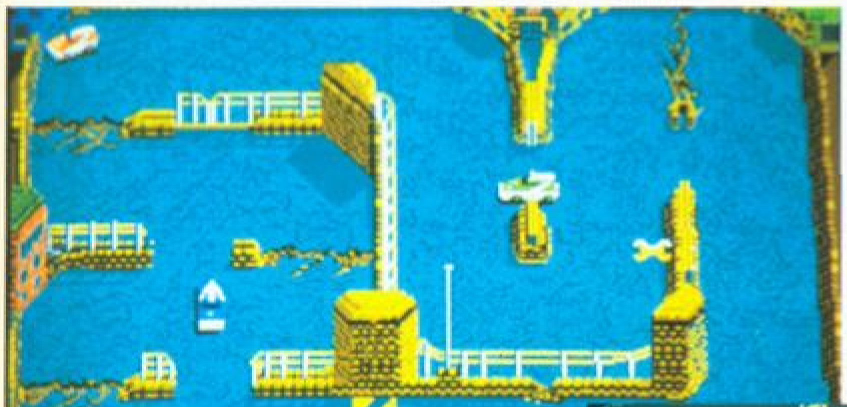


SPECTRUM

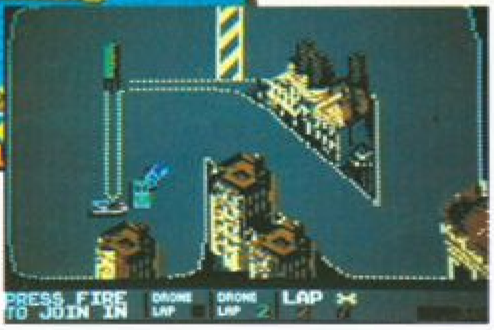
Very drab backgrounds. Because the cars are coloured differently our old friend Mr Colour-Clash pops up again. Unfortunately it's more than a minor niggle - when the cars are crashing, it's easy to loose track of which is yours in the mess of colours.

RELEASE DETAILS

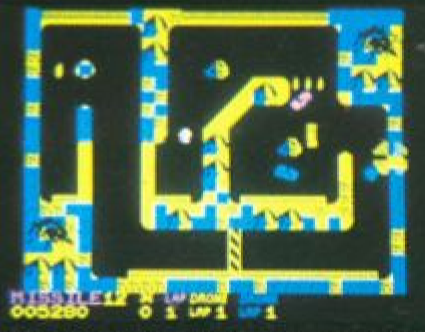
AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99	IMMINENT
C64	£19.99cart	OUT NOW
AMSTRAD CPC	£9.99cs/£14.99dk	OUT NOW
SPECTRUM	£9.99cs/$14.99dk	OUT NOW



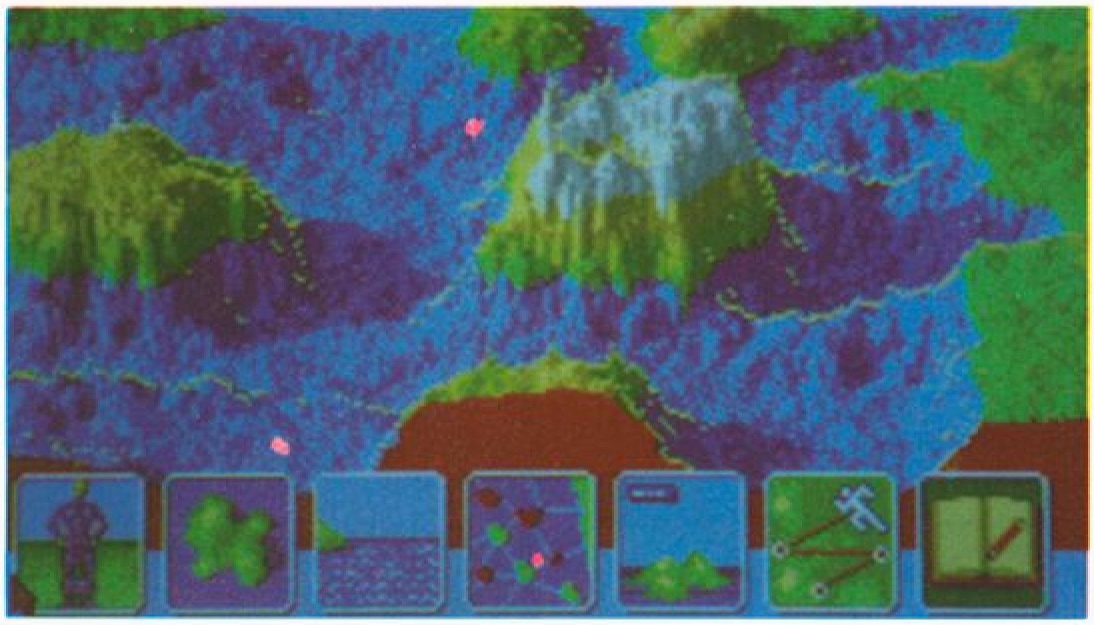
ATARI ST - Tearing around the Prison Yard. Take care not to get crushed between the opening and shutting gates or picked off by the snipers in the towers!



C64 - In the City there's a thousand things I want to shoot at you... (Yes, it's spot the lyric time!)



AMSTRAD CPC - Yes, this is NOT a Spectrum screenshot! Do not adjust your computer... the two versions are near identical.



ACE PREPLAY

- Easier to control than Midwinter
- Character control
- Interaction
- Lots of depth

- It remains to be seen just how intelligent the computerized characters will be

Release Details

AMIGA	£24.99	Feb
ST	£24.99	Feb

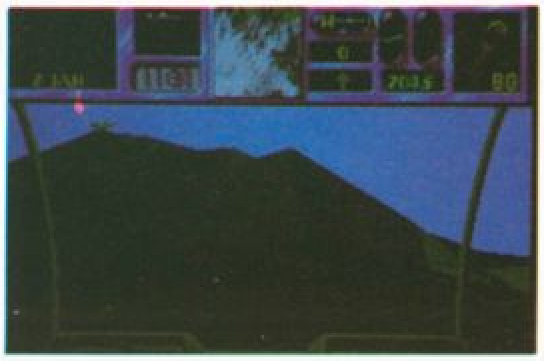
FLAMES of FREEDOM

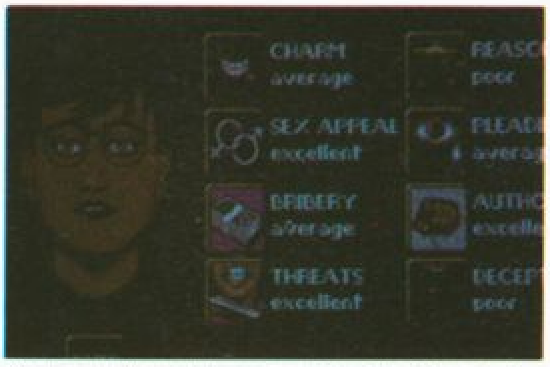
Microprose prepare to launch their assault on the New Year market with one of the biggest sequels around...

Maelstrom Games has been working on *Flames of Freedom* ever since the completion of *Midwinter*, and it has now reached the final straight in the development race.

Rather than simply producing a different scenario based on the Midwinter games mechanics, the whole game shell has been recrafted to make *Flames of Freedom* a truly massive and original game. Maelstrom paid close attention to criticisms of the original game, in order to align the game with everyone's tastes.

The most universally criticised element was that the number of characters which had to be controlled was simply too large. It wasn't possible to keep tabs on all the characters at once, and the game tended to be a massive juggling act rather than a linear path to a successful conclusion.

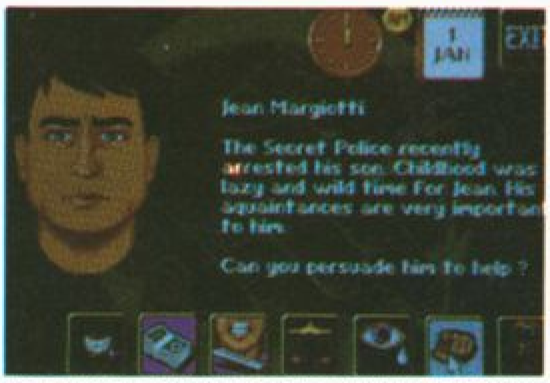




CHARM
average
SEX APPEAL
excellent
BRIBERY
average
THREATS
excellent
REASC
poor
PLEAD
averag
AUTHO
excelle
DECEP
poor

Driving over the sandy dunes in your jeep. The status area at the top of the screen shows direction and state of affairs.

So, *Flames of Freedom* offers only one character to control, but this central hero can have virtually any charactistic you want. Using the character designer, you can select from a massive array of chins, eyes, noses, ears, hairstyles and mouths, gradually piece together your ideal looking agent. A character will also be endowed with a brace of attributes which will affect their ability to interact with other people.

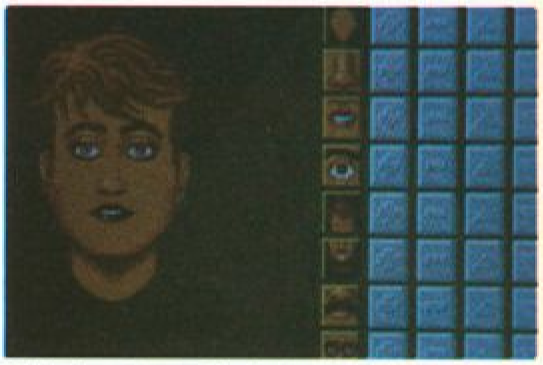


Jean Margiotti

The Secret Police recently arrested his son. Childhood was lazy and wild time For Jean. His aquaintances are very importan to him.

Can you persuade him to help ?

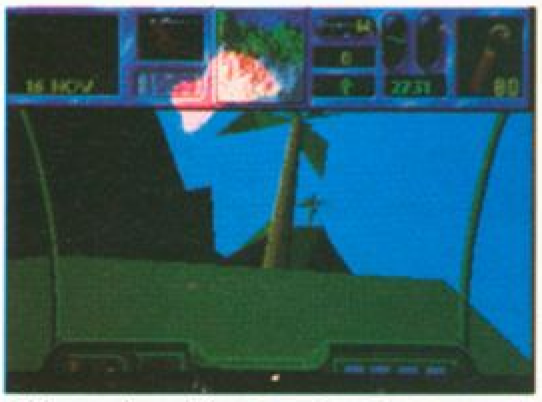
Jean Margiotti, an island resident. Recently in trouble with the cops, Jean may well be willing to help your cause. But which approach should you try?



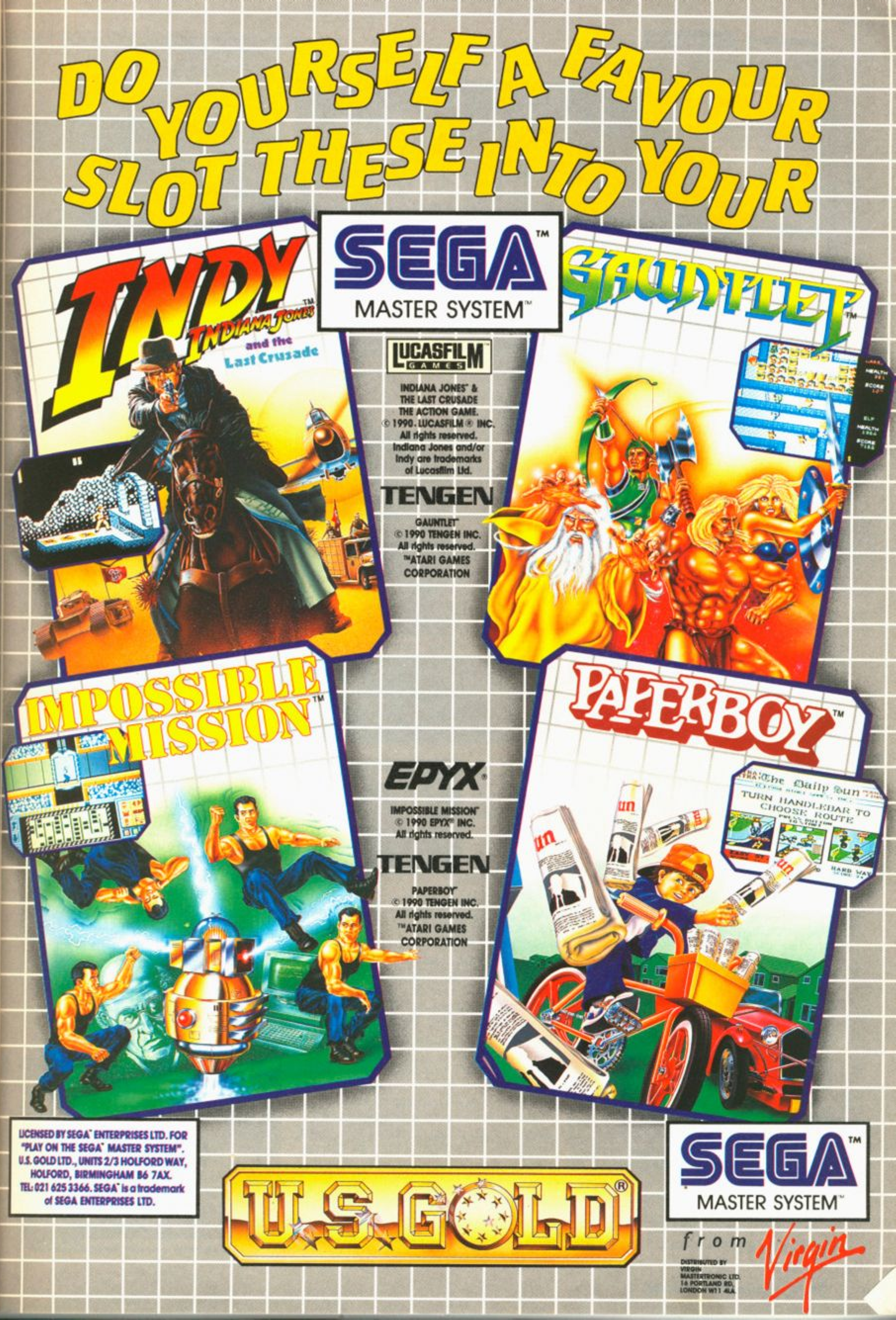
Making faces. From a wide selection of fleshy items, you can construct your very own special agent.

Since you are essentially alone in your mission, it's vital to control the indigenous personnel from each island in an effective manner. When you bump into one of these people, you can opt to use your Charm, sex appeal, authority, reasoning or deception to influence them. If you beg too much, however, you won't have much authority. If you rush around threatening everyone, no-one will listen to your reasoning.

Along with the niceties of interaction, there's the more physical side of the game, rushing around from island to island, blowing up enemy installations and claiming each atoll for the Free World. Since the game offers an enormous play area, is isn't desirable to have to watch all of the driving. Instead, an autopilot option allows you to plot your destination, and let the computer get on with getting you there. You will only be alerted or disturbed if there's some fighting to be done.



Driving over the sandy dunes in your jeep. The status area at the top of the screen shows direction and state of affairs.


DO YOURSELF A FAVOUR
SLOT THESE INTO YOUR
SEGA
MASTER SYSTEM
INDY
INDIANA JONES
and the
Last Crusade
GAUNTLET
IMPOSSIBLE MISSION
PAPERBOY
The Daily Sun
TURN HANDLEBAR TO
CHOOSE ROUTE
HARD WAY
LUCASFILM GAMES
TENGEN
EPYX
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MASTER SYSTEM
from Virgin

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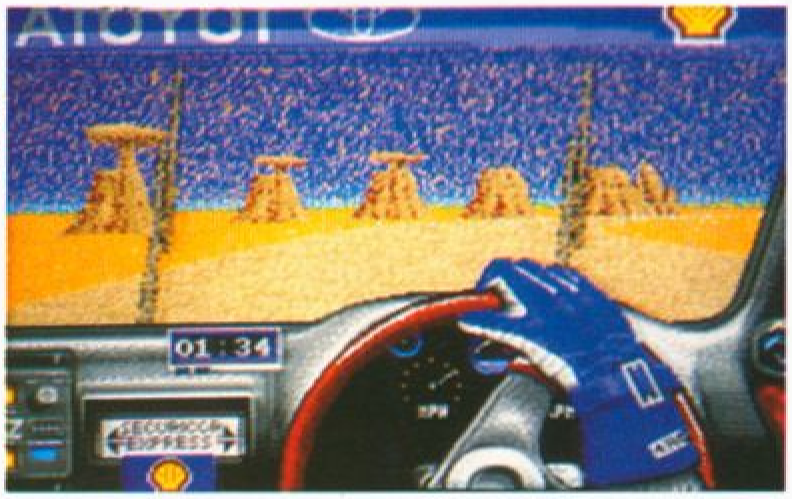


Mexico. Much a-slippin' and a-slidin' through the sands. Visibility is reduced by the sandstorms.

TOYOTA CELICA GT RALLY

With Carlos Sainz recently winning the Lombard RAC and confirming Toyota's World Championship title, the timing of GREMLIN's rally simulation couldn't be much better...

But timing isn't everything. And a game pitched at the simulation side of motorsport rather than taking the route of more instant appeal (a la Lotus) needs to be both accurate and accessible. Thankfully, the variety of rally stages incorporated (the whole World Championship, in fact) plus the co-driver briefing stage serve to bolster the 3D driving sections which are fun, if not awe-inspiring.

Your aim, quite simply, is to rocket your Toyota Celica GT 4 through English, Mexican and Norwegian stages and win the World Championship.

It's advisable to get some driving practice before attempting the World Championship. You can swot up on a typical stage from each nation to get to grips with the English rain, Mexican sand and treacherous Norwegian snow.

If you so desire, the computer will take care of all the gear changing for you. Since lots of the process of chucking the cars about relies on early gear changes, and the computer inevitably has to rely on a rapid loss of speed before it will change down for you, this can be a bit of a disadvantage and is only really recommended for novice drivers.

The motivation which keeps rally drivers pushing their cars and themselves to the limit is simple. Since everyone starts at staggered times, you never know - until the end of the stage - how well or otherwise the other drivers are doing. Dropping a couple of seconds can mean the difference between first and tenth place. As a result there's absolutely no respite. Whenever you feel you've reached a piece of the course where you can get up some speed, the biggest concern is that the other drivers have travelled down the same stretch faster.

Once the World Championship attempt has been undertaken, the option to make co-driver's notes should always be accepted. Here a top-down view of the next stage can be viewed. Using a number system from one to six, speech messages can be placed at any point, offering clipped but recognisable information about the course ahead. "Easy left", "Hard Left", "Right then Hard Left", etc.

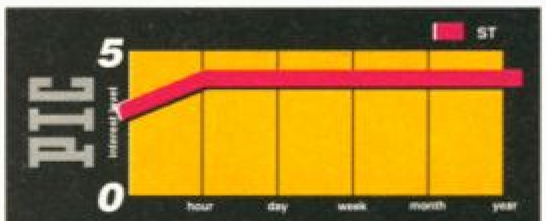
This part is far less painful than it sounds, and the precise location along the route when your co-driver will gargle out the instructions is vital to your success. Decent preparation will save you those valuable seconds which could make all the difference in the final scores. Certainly in the Mexican and Norwegian stages where there are times when you can't see a bloody thing, it's handy to be told if there's a hairpin bend coming up.

The driving itself is pretty good but you *must* learn to drive like a rally driver, allowing the car to slide rather than trying to keep in the middle of the road all the time. Turning in early and powering through the bends is tricky, but can be attained with practise.

It rapidly becomes apparent that any mistakes can cost you dearly in the rankings. Straying too far from the track results in a 20 second penalty while smashing up your motor will add a full 2 minutes; virtually impossible to make up.

Fans of Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge should be aware that this is a completely different style of game, but it's entertaining none-the-less.

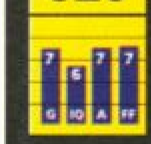
● Jim Douglas



Celica, unlike Lotus, lacks instant pick-up-ability. However, it does offer more long-term excitement and will hold your interest at a high level for a longer period. Arcade players will possibly find their efforts frustrated (probably because they haven't used the co-driver preparation properly).

ACE RATING

820



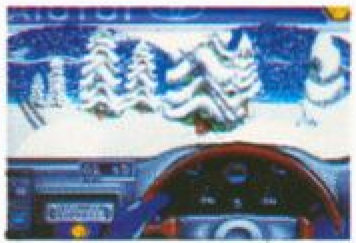
ATARI ST

The speed of the 3D driving sections is okay, but not brilliant. The frame rate can be a little jerky and the precise handling of the car suffers as a result. However, the digitised speech of the co-driver is excellent and the realism of the weather conditions and most aspects of car behaviour are impressive.

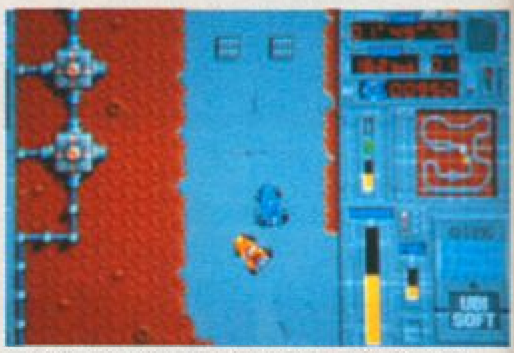
RELEASE DETAILS

ATARI ST	£24.99	JANUARY
AMIGA	£24.99	IMMINENT

No other versions planned



The Norwegian weather is never particularly forgiving for rally drivers. And the roads are *extremely* slippery.



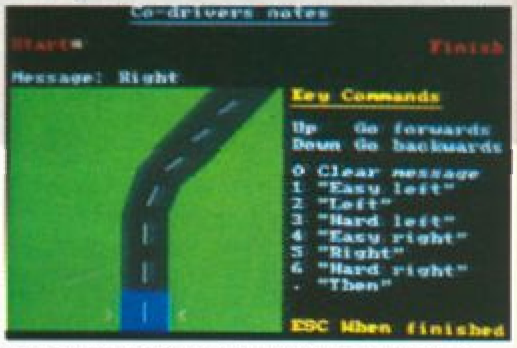
The red car and the blue car had a race. No. Not a Milky Way advert but instead a life and death battle for survival on the track.

Unlike the other two racing games we've reviewed this month, Ubi-Soft's Jupiter's Masterdrive offers a close-up view of the circuit as well as a miniature schematic in the status area at the bottom of the screen. It also offers a host of different vehicles to drive.

The action being located in space doesn't really effect the gameplay, except to serve as a believable environment in which the different tracks and vehicles exist.

The main menu screen is represented by Jupiter and its surrounding moons. From here, the player(s) can opt to play either a course from any level or enter the Masterdrive contest itself, where they play all courses on all levels in turn, with bonus stages.

Each level has a simple aim; to complete the requisite number of laps, collecting extra fuel and cash icons lying on the floor. If you incur too much damage - either by bashing into the trackside objects, other vehicles or being shot - your car will conk out. And all the



Co-driver preparation is vital if you are to enjoy success in the later stages of the rally. Messages are keyed in via a number system from 1 - 6

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE

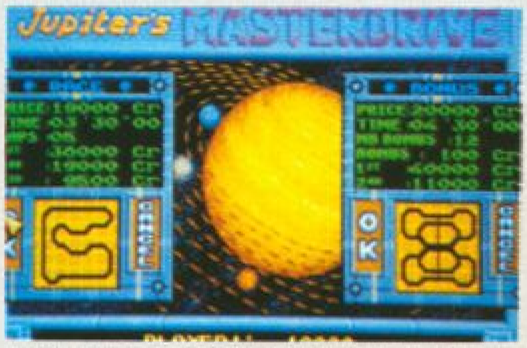
Ubisoft ride in (just) on the wave of top-down driving games. This time the action takes place in space...

extra engine-tuning and turbos you've bought will be lost.

Every satellite planet holds a race and a bonus track. Even if you perform awfully in the race, you can collect some bonus cash, fuel and repair icons in the bonus stages.

Should you choose to play two humans vs the computer, the screen will split into two. While the play area is restricted, reducing your view of the track ahead, disciplined use of the scanner will see you through.

The graphics are smooth and appealing and the vehicles truly behave as you would expect. They range from straight space-saloons through hovercraft to old-style formula one vehicles. Most are easy to control, but the hovercraft are tricky and frustrating: the whole of the hovercraft track is bordered with dangerous damage-inflicting walls and arrows which force you in unhelpful directions. Here the driving style needs to be radically altered to avoid wrecking your vehicle. Since most of the fun is provided by squealing around the track as fast as possible, this stage seems to defeat the object a bit.

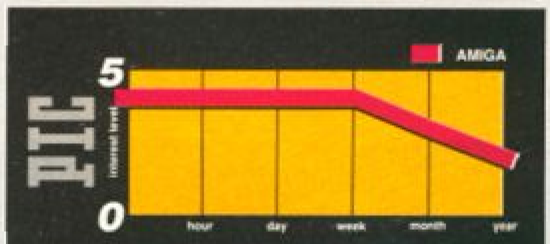


In order to race on a particular track, you must pay the entrance fee. Will the potential winnings be enough to cover your extra machine parts?

Most of the later stages offer short-cuts for braver players to attempt. These, however are often narrow and treacherous and coming a cropper up these allies will probably cost you dearly.

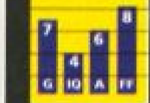
Aside from the tricky hovercraft level, playing Masterdrive is great fun. It doesn't offer massive long term appeal, but will keep driving fans happy for a good few months.

● **Jim Douglas**



Although Masterdrive may appear to offer only a reasonably short-lived entertainment, it's difficulty level ensures that you will keep coming back. It's equally enjoyable against a friend or computer, and the machine-controlled cars are especially well pitched.

ACE RATING
840



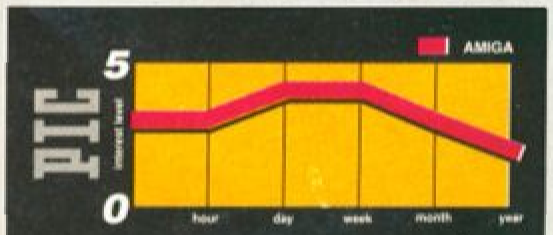
AMIGA

The scrolling on the Amiga version is super-smooth. And while the graphic level isn't particularly ambitious, the images are slick and attractive. The two player view can seem a little claustrophobic, but this compromise is far better than in Nitro when the lagging players find themselves transported to the head of the field.

RELEASE DETAILS

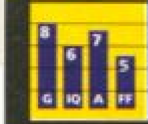
AMIGA	£24.99	IMMINENT
ATARI ST	£24.99	JANUARY

No other versions planned



Carthage is initially rather slow to get into and it takes a while to get familiar to the menu control system, but once proficient you soon become engrossed in stopping the ever advancing romans. However I don't think there's really enough in the game to keep the average gamer's interest up.

ACE RATING
784



VERSION

The fractals are implemented quite well and look quite realistic, making the map screen easy to use and good to look at. The 3-D section conveys the feel of charioteering and gives a suitable sensation of speed. Although the game is complete on the unexpanded Amiga, there are extra options available to one-meg users such as 2-D map and repeat function, along with reduced disk accessing.

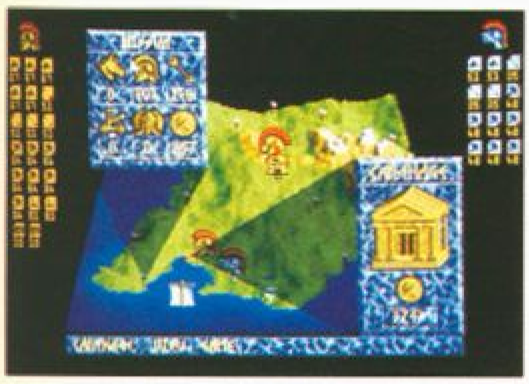
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW

No other versions planned

CARTHAGE

"...Alright. So, apart from irrigation, public education, hygiene, law and order and the roads, *what* have the Romans ever done for us?"



History question. Roman roads were: a) Straight. b) Bendy

Carthage was once a powerful city on the Gulf of Tunis, its empire encompassing the Phonecian colonies of North Africa and Spain. Inevitably they came into conflict with the Romans who subsequently conquered them in the three Punic Wars.

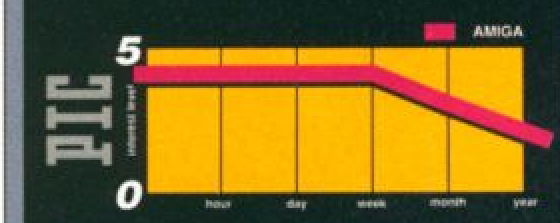
Carthage is set in the third war, where our hero Diogenes, receives a visit from his local God, Tanit who bestows upon him the "Power of sight" which allows you to see your territory, cities and armies, basically this serves as a stategic map from where most of the game is played, the objective being to change history and defeat the invading Romans.

This is achieved by creating armies and mobilising them effectively. Units available are cavalry, infantry, archers, catapaults and elephants, which are all organised into battalions. Actual combat is resolved by zooming in on the army from the strategic map. Here you move each battalion by clicking on it and then selecting a destination, should this be an army it will attack or follow, depending on whose side it's on. However, your armies (being a rather mercenary lot) will desert if not paid, so you must sustain a sound economy. This is done by effective distribution of your nation's wealth. Gold is transported via your chariot and each journey features an 3-D arcade sequence in which you race along dodging logs. Roman assassins also hinder your journey and the view changes to one from above, where you must shred your opponents wheels with your spikes.

However to me it didn't really seem to have much effect on the actual game, but served more as a diversion from the rest of the wargaming aspect. The map is fractally generated and looks very impressive, a useful feature is the option to rotate and zoom in at will. The sound too is good, but there isn't really much of it, as for the game itself it can be quite engrossing but I'd only recommend it to those with a taste for wargaming.

● **Khalid Howladar**

LINE OF FIRE



Line of Fire is both easy to get into and difficult. The first stage acts as an easy preliminary level where you can get used to the mouse control and store up some energy. From level 2, though, the game starts in earnest, and it will be quite a while before the enemy guerillas cave in.

ACE RATING

820

AMIGA

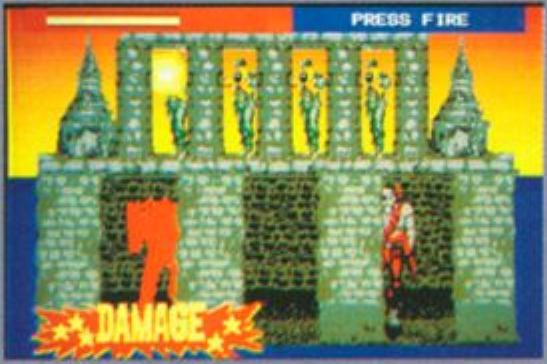
The graphics are well detailed, and fast enough. The rat-a-tat of the machine guns sounds a bit hollow, but the explosions are deep and thunderous. Disk access is minimal and swift and the overall feel is of a great deal of killing going on.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW

8-bit versions to follow late Jan

It's no life for the weak-hearted in the Line of Fire. US Gold endeavour to out-gore Sam Pekinpah.



These intermediate stages are tougher than they look. Even once you've finished off the baldies, the other keep shooting.

Blue and Red, combat team, heroes of the free world and two-man apocalypse, are in up to their necks in bad guys again. This time, their mission was to work deep behind enemy lines and steal the top secret Rapier machine gun. They got to the gun, but before they could escape, an enemy patrol stumbled upon them and sounded the alarm...

You come into the game at the fateful moment when you are discovered by the enemy guerillas and from there on in, the shooting hardly stops.

The screen is presented in 3D perspective, with the bad guys appearing just about everywhere. Guiding your crosshair sight around with your mouse, bullets can be fired by holding down the left button. You've got an unlimited supply of ammunition, so you might as well carry on firing. The right button launches a missile which basically clears the whole screen of

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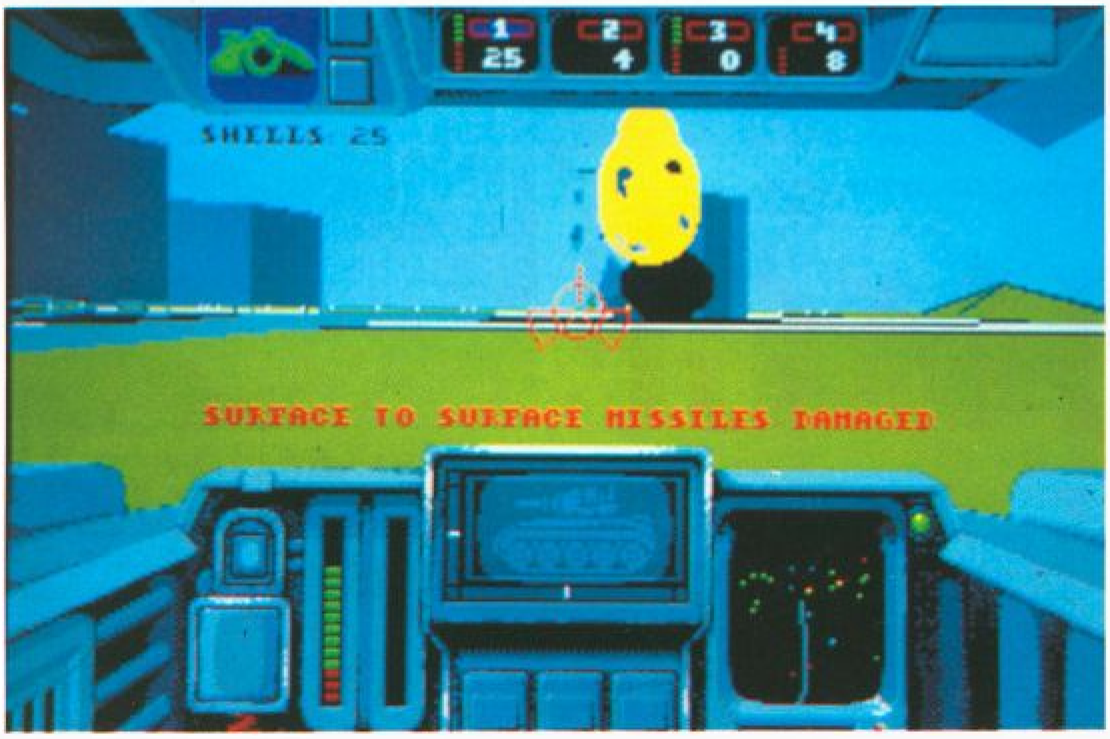
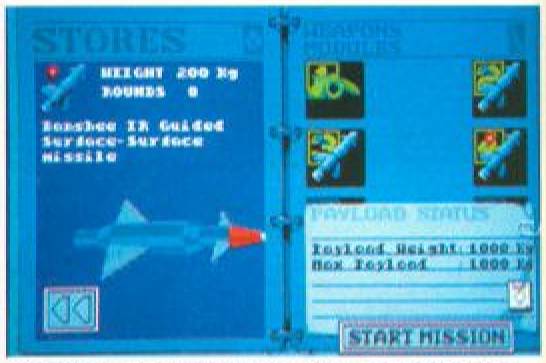




Take a weapon, any weapon. Flick through the available add-ons on the left, then click on one of the four boxes on the right to bolt it to the tank. Couldn't be easier!

Now this is - or (ha! ha!) was - the base. Following a few well-aimed shells its going to need more than a bit of plastering to look like new!

"And still the Ultra War continues, with hopes of a diplomatic peace settlement dashed by the accidental shooting down of the South Peace Envoy's jet as it crossed our lines.

"At dawn the Southern forces launched a heavy artillery bombardment on Northern lines. Thankfully, 99.99% of the incoming shells were eliminated by the lasers of orbiting defence satellites.

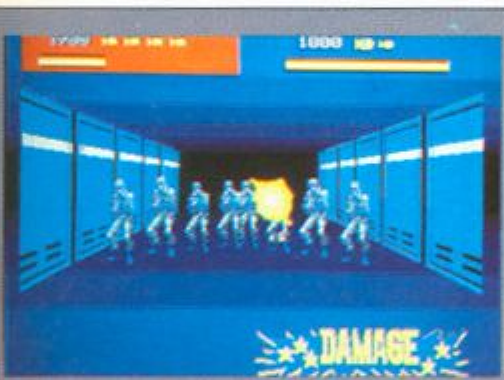
"In retaliation, the Northern generals launched a massed troop offensive. Unfortunately, most were killed as soon as they entered No-Man's Land by anti-personnel hover mines and all survivors were captured.

"Suffice to say, no ground was taken and the lines are still drawn as they have been for the last ten years. This is Kate Ainsey reporting from the Front Line for North News."

The Ultra War. Two massive superpowers, the North and the South, locked in a futile stalemate; their defensive systems so extensive and advanced that any major offensives are suicidal - they are instantly identified and counter-acted. The only effective way to make telling blows against the enemy is to airlift specially trained covert troops behind the enemy's lines.

This is where you come in. You control a Mauler class assault tank - a highly armoured, highly powerful, highly manoeuvreable and highly dangerous piece of hardware! At the beginning of the game you are given a checklist of fifteen missions, with ticks beside any you've completed. There's a basic shoot-'em-up mission to get you straight into the game and allow you to learn the basics of control. From then on things get a little more tricky. You could find yourself doing anything from rescuing hostages to escorting a convoy of supply trucks to recovering a downed satellite.

You can flick through the missions, look at their briefings and maps, and see which you fancy. Once you've chosen you get the opportu-

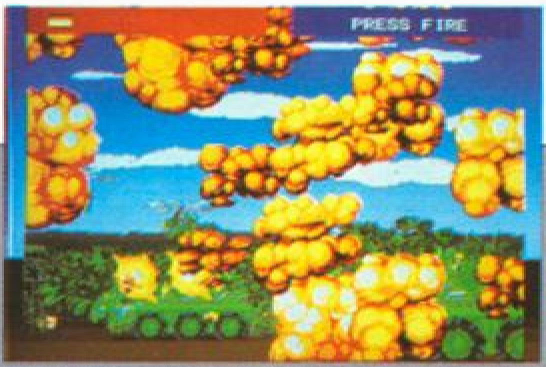


In the first stage, the bad guys co-operatively line up in duck-shoot style. Hold the button down and sweep the mouse!

enemy vehicles, troops and rockets. You begin the mission with three rockets. Extras, like extra energy can be picked up by shooting packing cases lying on the floor.

If you opt for a two player game, each player will have to look after their own half of the screen; any hits inflicted on their half, either from rockets, bullets or bombs will be deducted from the appropriate strength-ometer.

Each coming stage is indicated by a little animated map. You begin your mission in the enemy camp, with the soldiers hiding behind oil barrels and hanging down from the rafters. Running through the corridors here is pretty easy, and making wide sweeping motions with the crosshairs will take out 60% of the enemy soldiers. Along the way, it's vital to collect all the first aid boxes if you are to avoid the second stage.



Grenades should only be used as a last resort. They'll clear everything on screen. Collect extra grenades as you go along.

Stage two takes place in the jungle, and survival will become increasingly difficult. Armoured cars, helicopters, foot soldiers and gun implacement all have to be dealt with.

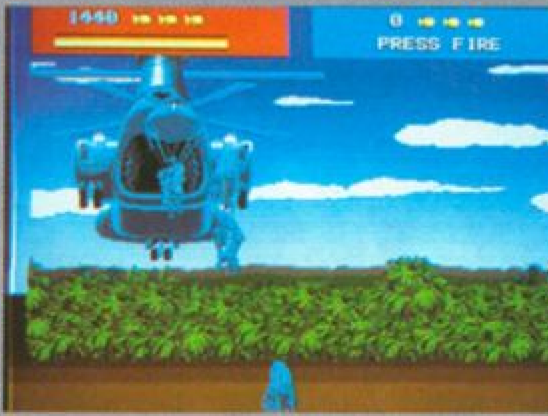
Heavy prioritizing is necessary if you're going to make your way through the stage. Missiles from helicopters must be shot down first, since they inflict the most damage.

The much-touted screen-rotation routine works reasonably well; once you reach the end of a path, all the objects are moved around to give the impression of a camera panning round. This makes the game feel more believable. It works especially well on stage 2, when the jeep in which you ride is backing away from the enemy, and you're laying down a supressing fire.

If you get killed with some credits remaining, you have a couple of seconds' respite before you must start again. Since the screens carry on scrolling past, you can avoid an especially tricky stage.

Line of Fire offers little for strategy fans. It simply operates on basic reaction time and hand-to-eye co-ordination. But it's well implemented, and the sheer number of enemies on screen is very high. These points, and the new scrolling method will offer enough to justify its purchase to arcade action addicts.

● Jim Douglas



The end-of-level helicopter. Parachuting guerillas leap out of the back. Plug their 'chutes and then shoot the chopper.

BATTLE COMMAND

Have a 'barrel' of laffs with REALTIME/OCEAN's tank warfare game!

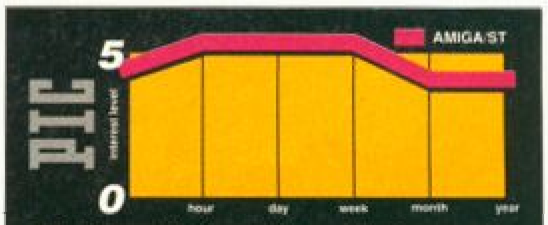
nity to select any of thirteen offensive and defensive attachments to fit into the four available weapon pods, which should be picked bearing in mind the mission requirements.

Then it's into action. There's an animated graphics sequence showing the Mauler being dropped into enemy territory, then the view switches to a view out of your cockpit generated from solid polygons. In the distance you can see the receding outline of your chopper. Now you're on your own. On your travels you'll see trees, hills, buildings and installations...and tanks, jeeps, attack choppers and jet tank-busters!

All of the major functions of the Mauler can be accessed using the mouse. In 'Active' mode you can move the tank by moving the mouse in the required direction and pressing the left button will fire the currently active weapon. In 'Passive' mode a pointer appears, and can be used to click on various icons around the cockpit. I'm not normally a huge fan of this genre of 3D games. Often the thought of a game lasting 30 hours or so seems more like a threat than a bonus. *Battle Command* avoids this by breaking the game up in to missions. They're going to take some time to master, and each provides a real sense of satisfaction on completion.

This isn't meant to be a rigourous future war simulation - the game is slanted more towards fun and action than some sort of pseudo-accuracy - and it succeeds admirably. It may just be *Battlezone* for the 90s, but at least it's a thinking person's *Battlezone*.

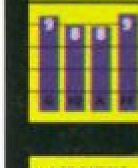
● David Upchurch



Sadly, the presentation is poor, with a very drab title screen and unimpressive, supposedly ominous tune. However, once you try a mission and the polygons start shifting you'll be hooked. The Starter Mission is excellent, and gets you into the game with a minimum of fuss. The ability to choose the Missions in any order means you won't get too frustrated if you're finding one too tough, and the variety of mission styles means that there's one for every mood!

ACE RATING

899



AMIGA

What a fantastic game!The Mauler is a joy to operate - the mouse steering is sensitive but not so much so that the Mauler is uncontrollable and the weapon icons are large and clear so there's no confusion in battle. The polygon graphics are fast , detailed and generate a real feeling of 'being there'. The sound effects are great too - meaty cannon booms and explosions abound. Add Missions which often require brains as well as brawn and you've got the recipe for one of the best 3D games on the market.

ACE RATING

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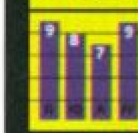


ATARI ST

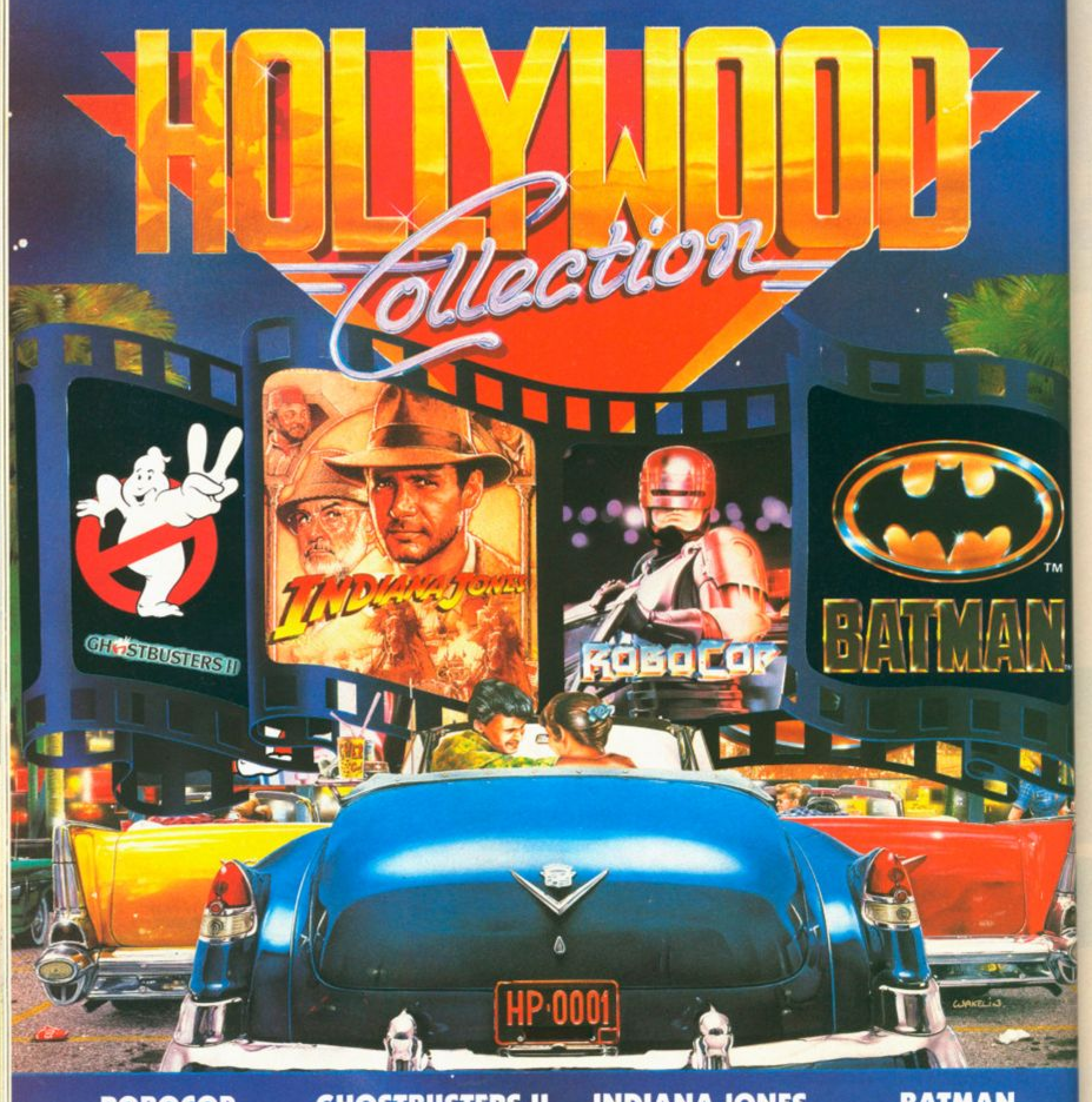
As usual in comparisons to the Amiga, the graphics are slightly but noticeably faster and the sound effects are poorer, so the final ratings come out the same. Apart from that there are no differences - the game's just as brilliant. All wannabe Montgomerys apply here. A tad more originality and Ocean would've had an ACE Trailblazer on their hands.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£29.99	January

No other versions planned

THE COMPILATION PACK OF MEGA STARS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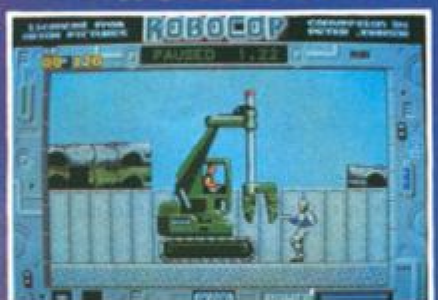
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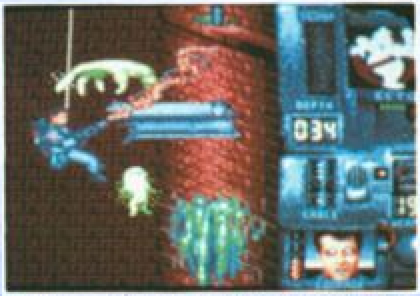

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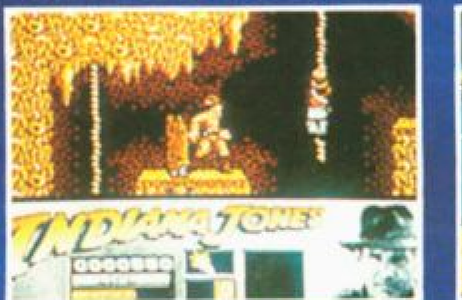
INDIANA JONES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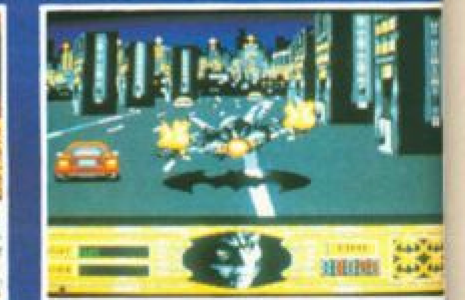
BATMAN



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AMIGA ATARI ST

ocean®

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COMMODORE

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The ACE guide to THE GREATEST GAMES of all time *

But hold your horses - don't scan through the lists and, in a burst of outrage at the omission of Mutant Squirrels from Zrill IV, rip ACE into ersatz confetti. We're not totally inflexible - indeed, later we'll tell you how you can nominate those oft-forgotten classics for inclusion and win some software into the bargain. But first, understand what the criteria for nomination are:

(1) The game must have originated on a home computer - that's why games like Rainbow Islands and Planetoid (the definitive Defender clone on the BBC B) have (regretfully) been omitted. However, games that have radically mutated an arcade idea are valid (i.e. Thrust, despite its obvious Asteroid and Lunar Lander roots, successfully mixed the two to make a totally different hybrid).
(2) The game must be a 'landmark', in the sense that it introduced a new concept or technique into the gaming world and/or advanced the 'state-of-the-art' in its genre.
(3) The game must be enjoyable - obviously! - and have long-lasting appeal.

We consider the games in this list to be essential to any gaming buff's collection, if not for their gameplay then simply for their place in history. Each game is described, and details provided on who manufactured it and on which format the game is best (n.b. 'All formats' indicates that the game was classic on all implementations). Next month we hope to provide you with a details of where you can get some of the older titles.

As we mentioned at the start, these lists are not cast in stone and we're open to persuasion that we've erred in our choices. If you have any suggestions, then write and tell us on a postcard at: ACE Great Games, ACE, Box 2, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, along with your (brief) arguments.

A draw will be held on 8th March 1991 (a month after the second part), when we will draw ten cards from the bag and send them a FREE piece of software, so remember to add your name, address and computer format to the postcard. We have reserved three floors of the building for the sacks of mail from Enraged of Cheam!

PART 1

At long last, ACE names the games it considers to be the Greatest Of All Time!

ADVENTURE GAMES

- ***The Hobbit***

Melbourne House (Spectrum)

The game that put graphics on the adventure map (no pun intended), featuring over 20 (pretty good for their time) illustrations! Also famous for the first appearance of supposedly 'independent' characters, although all that seemed to happen was Thorin kept sitting down and singing about gold and Gandalf kept wandering off.

- ***Valhalla***

Legend (Spectrum)

Probably the first (and prime) example of excessive media hype. A world populated - again - by 'independent' characters (which meant that they never did what you asked them to), each location was depicted graphically, with a short text description below.

- ***Wonderland***

Virgin Mastertronic/Magnetic Scrolls (PC)

Employing 'Magnetic Windows', The Scrolls rewrite the adventuring book. Powerful windowing system practically banishes the Typing Bogie from what is essentially a traditional text/graphics adventure with the usual superb illustrations (including animation). Reviewed in ACE Issue 39.

- ***Adventureland***

Adventure International (All formats)

The first of the Scott Adams adventure series, originally developed on the Tandy TRS80 and later ported onto most 8-bit formats. Originally, these games were text only but graphics were added later. Few locations, but almost every one containing a devilish puzzle, the Scott Adams adventure series has influenced practically every traditional adventure game since.

- ***The Boggit***

CRL/Delta 4 (All formats)

Early game by Fergus McNeill which showed that (a) utilities like *The Quill* could be used to produce commercial quality adventures and (b) that nothing in adventures – and especially not hobbits – was sacred. Fergus' satirical home-brew games launched an entire industry of attic programmers that still produces adventure product today.

ARCADE ADVENTURES

- ***Android 2***

Vortex (Spectrum)

Basically an isometric-3D maze shoot-'em-up, the aim was to shoot five giant worms in the head and thus win transport to the next level. Amazing (for their time) colourful scrolling graphics and gameplay that was both thoughtful and frenetic make this a true classic.

- ***Atic Atac***

Ultimate Play the Game (Spectrum)

Pre-empted *Gauntlet* by allowing you to pick whether you wanted to play a warrior, wizard or thief. Set in a huge sprawling multi-level castle, you had to explore the different rooms, looking for colour-coded keys to locked doors and shooting the evil denizens, with the ultimate aim of finding the four parts to the Key of ACG and thus escape.

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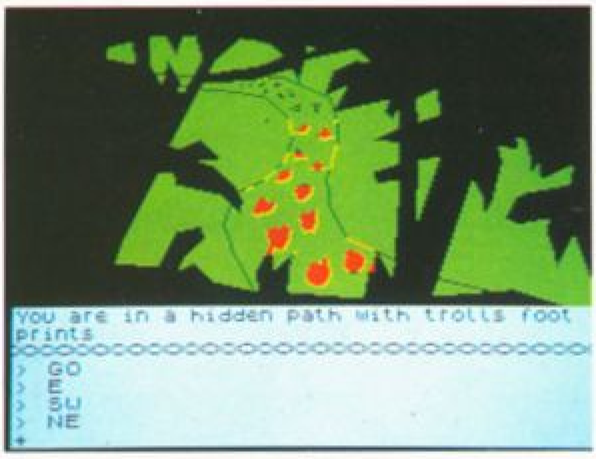
* PROBABLY

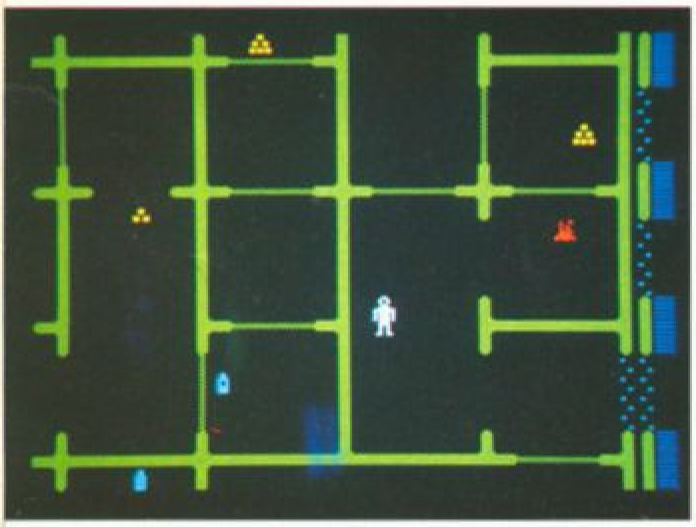


ADVENTURE GAMES - *The Hobbit* on the ZX Spectrum. It may look a little primitive now, but these graphics were groundbreaking in their day.

● ***Halls of the Things***
Crystal (Spectrum)
An overhead maze game - just you, lots of locked doors and hidden keys, and literally hundreds of hungry 'things'. The maze was primitve-looking, but this was made up for by the number of homing-in nasties on-screen at one time.

● ***Knight Lore***
Ultimate Play the Game (Spectrum)
Another romp around a multi-roomed dungeon, each room was viewed from the top corner, thus affording a 3D-isometric view of the action. Basically a quest to find the different ingredients to a potion that would rid you of a werewolf curse, the highly-playable and unspeakably-addictive gameplay centred around leaping on precarious platforms while avoiding resident nasties. Still looks good now. Fantastic!

● ***Leisure Suit Larry I and III***
Sierra On-Line (PC)
LSL1 was the game that put PC entertainment on the map. Heavily pirated, its promise (not fulfilled) of soft porn installed it on office hard disks throughout the nation. In fact, the game was quite able to stand on its own feet without the titillation, the main attraction being the nerdish Larry Laffer who, in lounge suit and a state of eternall amorous endeavour, is constantly striking out in his search for the perfect mate. *LSL2* wasn't so engaging, but *LSL3*, despite a slightly more disagreeable flirt with female figures, was another classic graphic adventure. *LSL 3* was reviewed in ACE Issue 28.



ARCADE ADVENTURES - *Halls of the Things* on the ZX Spectrum. The bare-looking graphics were countered by the speed and number of nasties on-screen when things got tough.

PLATFORM-BASED GAMES

● ***Hunchback***
Ocean (C64/Spectrum)
The first licensed coin-op conversion. Make your way across Notre Dame's ramparts through umpteen screens of gaping pits, spear-lobbing guards and fireballs to rescue Esmerelda.

● ***Impossible Mission***
Epyx/US Gold (C64)
'Destroy him, my robots'. The evil Prof. Elvin Atombender is holding the world to ransom with a nuclear bomb. It's your job to infiltrate his complex, search rooms for the codes that will help you progress, while avoiding a range of deadly 'droids, and eventually defuse the nuke. But that scream when you fell into a bottomless pit...

● ***Jet Set Willy***
Software Projects (Spectrum)
The sequel to *Manic Miner* (see below), but a classic in its own right. Following a wild party, Miner Willy has to collect every dirty glass in his many-roomed mansion, avoiding its bizarre inhabitants - only then will his housekeeper, Maria, let him go to bed. Marred only by the fact that it's impossible to finish the game without cheating due to a couple of bugs.

● ***Manic Miner***
BugByte (Spectrum)
The first great home computer platform game, written by Matthew Smith. Twenty screens of platforms, collapsing walkways and wandering animals to avoid, as you try to find the keys that will open the doorway to the next screen. Ah, happy memories...

● ***The Mario Series***
Nintendo
You must have heard of Mario. The brave little builder first appeared in the arcade game *Donkey Kong* and (despite a brief lapse in character as the baddy in *Donkey Kong Jr*) has become a phenomenon on par with Mickey Mouse. Each game features lots of platforms, lots of bonuses, lots of hidden levels and lots and lots of fun.

PUZZLE GAMES

● ***Boulderdash***
First Star/US Gold (C64)
A very simple concept - mine through boulders in search of diamonds, and avoid boulders falling from above. Later levels introduced marauding lifeforms to add to your troubles. Recently released on the Gameboy, and still brilliant (see review in ACE Issue 40).

● ***Deflektor***
Gremlin/Vortex (All formats)
Use mirrors, fibre-optic conduits and polarising and refracting blocks to their optimum to bend a laser beam from the generator to a receiver. On offer are 60 levels of mind-bending puzzling.

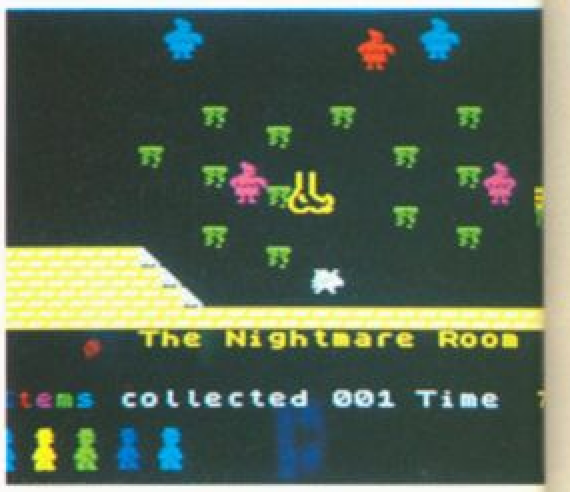
● ***Pipemania***
Empire International (All formats)
All action takes place on 10 x 7 grid. You have a certain amount of time before Flooz starts leaking from an outflow pipe. Using random pipe sections you have to make a tube for the Flooz to ooze down. If it spills out then your game is over. Keep the Flooz flowing long enough and you gain access to the next, tougher, level. Reviewed in ACE Issue 31.

A READER WRITES...

Vincent Lawrence of Basingstoke obviously has a touch of psychic power because he's already sent in his all-time Top Ten. Here it is, along with comments by us...

1. *Racing Destruction Set* (Electronic Arts) - A very interesting choice.
2. *Elite* (Acornsoft) - We couldn't agree more.
3. *Stunt Car Racer* (Microstyle) - Great minds think alike...
4. *Firefly* (Special FX) - Hmm, great game, but not really groundbreaking.
5. *Alien 8* (Ultimate Play The Game) - Another excellent isometric-3D game from Ultimate, but *Knight Lore* was the first.
6. *Atic Atac* (Ultimate Play The Game) - The choice of the professionals!
7. *Kick Off* (Anco) - How could it not be here?
8. *Nemesis the Warlock* (Martech) - Really? Lots of luvverly hack 'n' slay, but little more.
9. *Millenium 2.2* (Activision) - A very competent space strategy game, but didn't exactly do anything fundamentally new to the genre as, say, *Powermonger* did.
10. *Darkside* (Incentive) - Good but the award goes to the trendsetter, *Driller*.

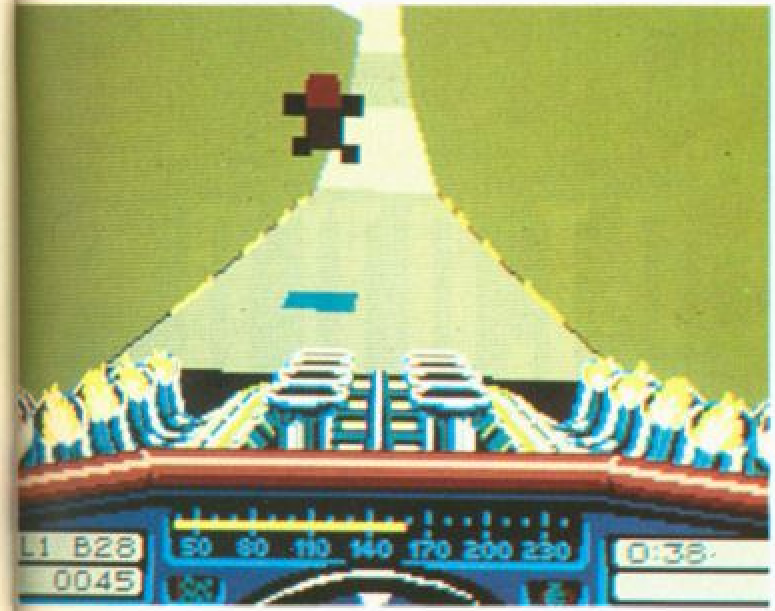
Good choices, Vincent, and we overlap on four of them and almost do on two more (*Alien 8* and *Darkside*). Your choice of the *Racing Destruction Set* is very interesting and it's a game that's certainly worthy of consideration - we'll put it to the Board of Selectors when they meet! But what do the rest of you think? Write in and tell us!



PLATFORM-BASED GAMES - *Jet Set Willy* on the ZX Spectrum. Another Matthew Smith classic. Here Miner Willy has been metamorphosed into a flying pig beset by Marias in the Nightmare Room!

● ***Split Personalities***
Domark (All formats)
Based on the slide puzzle idea. The computer threw pieces of someone's portrait out onto a 5 x 5 grid. You had to sort them out to form the full picture. Occasional bombs also appeared which had to be moved off the screen before they exploded, losing you a life. See ACE Issue 39 for a full retrospective.

● ***Tetris***
AcademySoft/Mirrorsoft (All formats)
The first Russian-written game to hit the big time. Randomly-shaped blocks drop into a pit and as they fall you can rotate them. The aim is to make them slot together and form complete horizontal lines, whereupon they disappear. If the



RACING GAMES - *Stunt Car Racer* on the Amiga. Polygon-based graphics were vital to model the violent up 'n' down nature of this game.

blocks reach the top of the pit then the game ends. As success increases so does the speed at which the blocks drop... Infuriatingly and endlessly addictive. See the be-cobwebbed review in ACE Issue 5.

RACING GAMES

● ***3D Death Chase***

Micromega (Spectrum)

Remember the Speeder Bikes from *Return of the Jedi*? Here you ride one, in a mad high-speed flight through a dense forest. There are no opponents (its main fault), it's just a case of staying alive long enough. Technically stunning for its time.

● ***Indianapolis 500***

Electronic Arts (All formats)

All the action is viewed in polygon-generated 3D, which allowed for highly realistic modelling of the cars, track and surrounding detail. Multiple camera angle options let you watch the race from almost anywhere, even an overhead airship. Reviewed in ACE Issue 29.

● ***Full Throttle***

Micromega (Spectrum)

Ah, the purity of the open road - just you, a bike... and 39 other riders. The best of the early 3D racing games. Action was fast, and coming first was no mean feat, especially when one slight collision causes your speed to drop to zero, then just as you start to speed up, another bike rams into the back of you, dropping your speed to zero, then just as...

● ***Pitstop II***

Epyx (C64)

A highly enjoyable race-car game for one, but get a friend to join in and the fun more than doubles. Using a novel split-screen effect (recently revived for Gremlin's *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge*), both players could participate at the same time.

● ***Stunt Car Racer***

Microstyle (All formats)

Race against a lone opponent on 8 different polygon-generated track types. However, these are no ordinary tracks - they rise and fall and, worst of all, are peppered with gaping pits that have to jumped at the right speed. Wreck your buggy and you're out. Link two computers for head-to-head play. This roller-coaster ride of a game was reviewed in ACE Issue 24.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

● ***Bard's Tale 1,2,3***

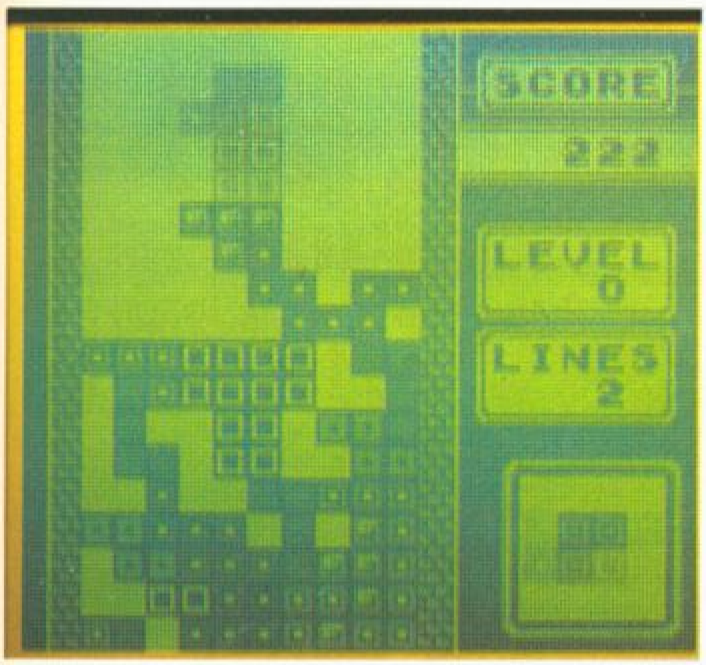
Interplay/Electronic Arts (All formats)

The original seek'n'slaughter RPG allows you to create and save parties of characters and then put them through a series of encounters with monsters as you penetrate a complex multi-level maze. Graphics are represented in head-on *Dungeon Master* type style (though less sophisticated) and gameplay can be interminable. Massive challenge in *BTs 2 and 3,* though little development of gameplay techniques throughout the series. *BT2* was reviewed in ACE Issue 7.

● ***Dungeon Master***

FTL/Mirrorsoft (All formats)

Guide a party of four brave souls through 14 levels of monsters and mazes in the search for a magic staff to slay the evil Lord Chaos. Generated an incredible amount of atmosphere and tension by the use of a 3D bit-mapped graphic first-person view and sparse but effective sound. Reviewed in ACE Issue 8.



PUZZLE GAMES - *Tetris* on the Gameboy. A prime example of a classic puzzle game; graphics and sound are secondary to the compulsive gameplay.

● ***Ring of Darkness***

Wintersoft (All formats)

Ancient game using similar presentation to early *Ultimas* and was the UK's only contribution to this gamestyle. *ROD* set new standards in Britain for RPG-influenced graphic adventuring, though you only had one character and the graphics (viewed from above with tine animated figures) were extremely primitive.

● ***Ultima V***

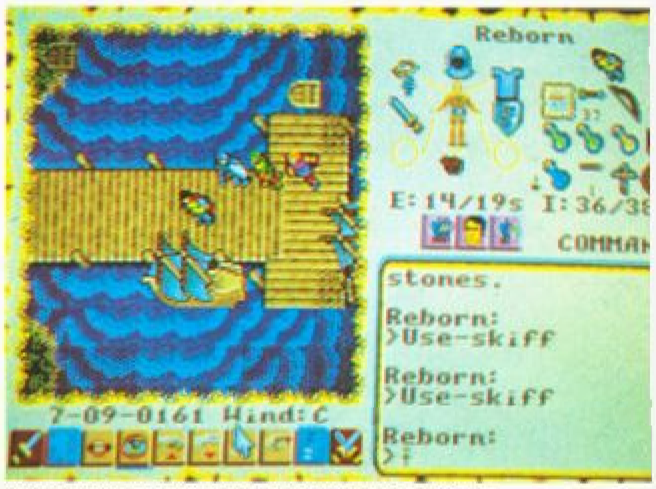
Origin/Mindscape (All formats except CGA PCs)

Although the *Ultima* series was well established in the US from the very first release, it wasn't until *Ultima V* that Origin really began to attract attention in the UK. Set in the mythical land of Britannia, *Ultima V* represented a quantum leap in graphic representation from previous episodes, with a vast, complex map and literally hundreds of characters to encounter. A tremendous game and well worth getting even if you've got *Ultima VI.* Reviewed in ACE Issue 13.

● ***Ultima VI***

Origin/Mindscape (All formats)

First Ultima game to depart from the traditional small-scale overhead map display and use a larger scale scrolling map throughout the game. You also get separate figures for every member of your party, who follow you around faithfully as you explore Britannia. Unparalleled graphic detail for a game of this size – and the size is awesome. Reviewed in ACE Issue 33.



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ROLE-PLAYING GAMES - *Ultima VI* on the IBM PC. The latest in the ever-changing and improving *Ultima* series.

THE GREATEST GAMES

NEXT MONTH IN PART 2

More controversy next month in Part 2 of the ACE Guide To The Greatest Games Of All Time, where the categories will be:

● *Original Games* - Those titles that you just can't pigeonhole!

● *Shoot-'Em-Ups* - Which ones do we think give you the sorest trigger finger?

● *Simulations* - The games that are more real than real life!

● *Sports Simulations* - Become a silicon Gazza with your computer!

● *Strategy Games* - Games so good they'd give Napoleon another reason to say "Not tonight, Josephine"!

...and the category without which no Guide would be complete...

● *Turkeys* - Those games you tried to forget, but couldn't!

Don't miss it! Order your copy of ACE now, out on 9th February 1991.

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Screen Shots: Atari ST version

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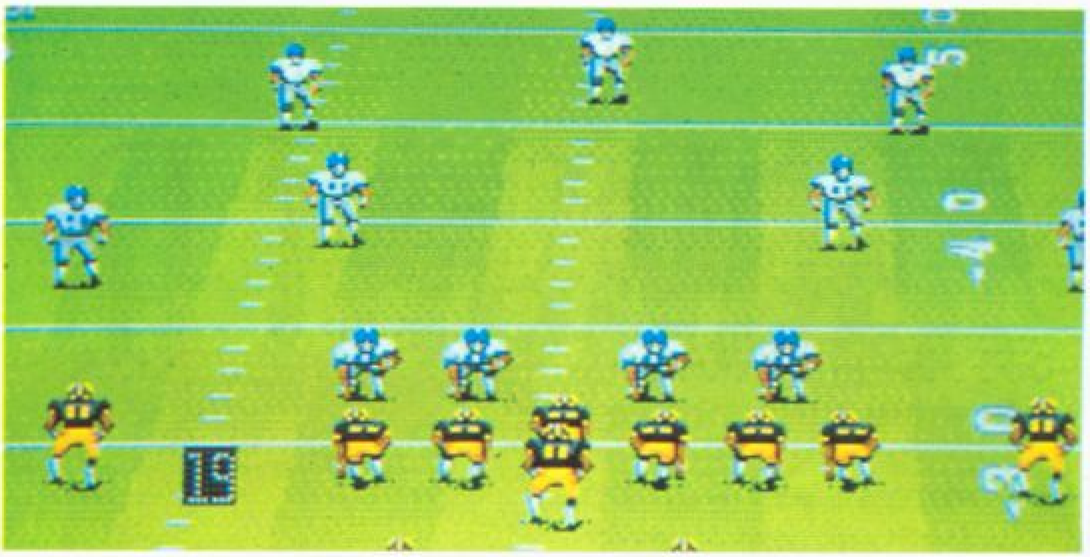
Twenty-eight, forty-four, twenty-eight, hut! ELECTRONIC ARTS goes for a Megadrive touchdown



Let's try that new play!

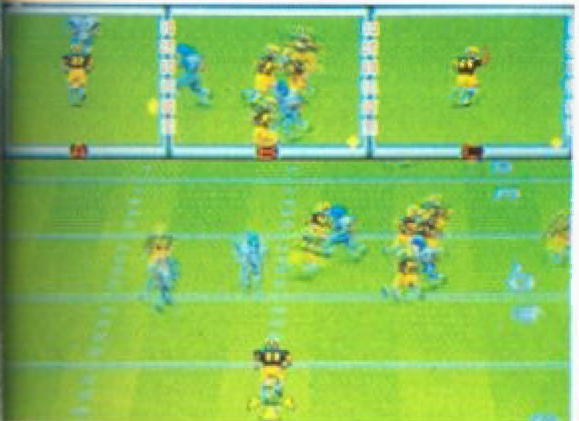
JOHN MADDEN AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Fire off the line, offence before the snap, call an audible... if you don't know what the hell I'm going on about then this game probably won't appeal to you. This would be a great shame as *John Madden* is the best American Football simulation to ever make a play on silicon.

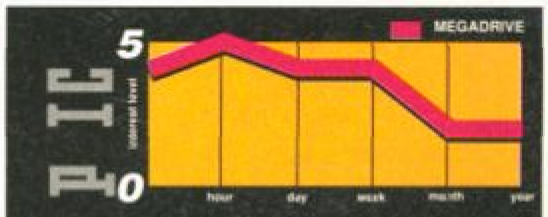
You start the game by selecting the home/visitor team (16 teams plus the All-Madden kick-butt team) and player (one or two human players plus console-controlled – alias Mr Madden himself), period length (five or fifteen minutes) and season mode (regular, sudden death or playoff). Snow, rain and mud weather conditions are possible in the play-offs. If you want to get straight down to it, you can try the default settings of playing San Francisco at home against the Madden-coached Denver team in a regular season game with five minute quarters. Phew!

Next, you check-out the scouting reports with strength evaluations like 'great pass coverage' and weakness highlights such as 'some holes in the secondary'. The visiting team then kicks off. During the game, your control pad changes into a multi-action controller whose function changes depending on the current state of play – if you're kicking, passing play, defence before the snap, etc. The player currently in your control stands on a four-arrow symbol for easy recognition.

Overall management of the game is as sweet as cherry pie. For example, when you're on offence the Play Calling Screen (which appears above the field along with the scoreboard) asks for a set, while the defence Play Calling Screen asks for a formation. A set is the nickname for the group of players who will run your play. There are six sets to choose from, each representing a different group of offensive geezers (literally!). A formation such as goal line, far and near tells your player set how to line up before the snap. Once you've chosen a play, the only way to change it is by calling an audible or time-out.



A close-up of the eligible receivers



I enjoyed playing *John Madden* more than any other American Football simulation out on the market. The game has the look of an arcade game, though you won't be converted to this idiosyncratic American sport if you don't like State-side football already. Everything is here, the only missing element is the lack of a commercial break. If you're a fan of American Football it's worth buying a Megadrive just to play this game. Need I continue?

ACE RATING

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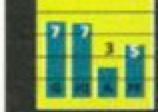


MEGADRIVE

Playing *John Madden* on the Megadrive is almost like watching a televised game. It's unbelievably realistic. The sprite football heroes are about an inch high, finely detailed and adequately animated. The ground uses a novel scrolling technique to great effect. Added to this is an ample sprinkling of muffled but intelligible sampled speech, grunts and groans. Though I'm disappointed with Rob Hubbard's soundtracks – they sound like they come from a BBC2 test card transmission. The constant white-noise sound effect for the crowd can get a little irritating.

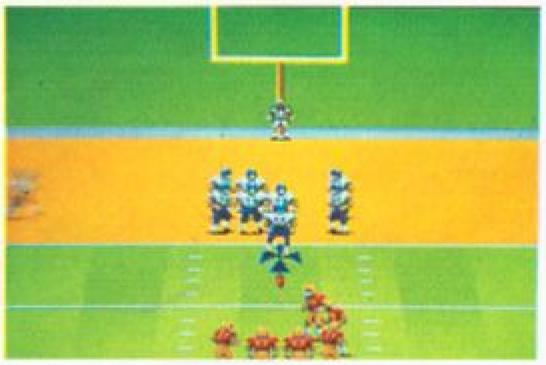
MEGADRIVE £39.99 OUT NOW

John Madden American Football comes complete with a comprehensive manual to explain all the intricacies of playing the game in full detail. If you want a taste of the 'real-thing' before you've got the hang of things, you can witness a brutal exhibition game between San Francisco and Denver. You should then be ready to go for your first touch-down. Who knows, if you're good enough you could end up providing commentary on a Channel Four American Football programme.

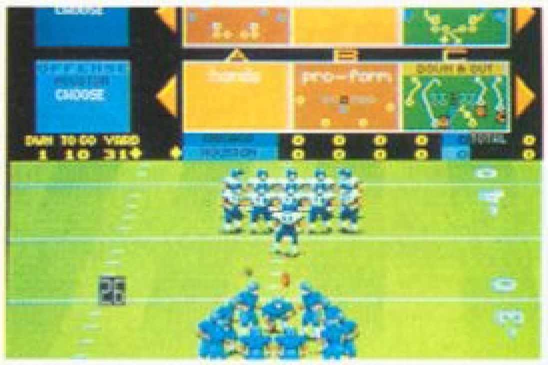
● **Rik Haynes**

KICKING OFF

***John Madden American Football* was developed by the Park Place Production Team in Oceanside, California. John Madden designed the game himself with help of Scott Orr and Richard Hilleman. Jim Simmons was the programmer with graphics provided by Steve Quinn, Art Alvia and Brian O'Hara. Rob Hubbard created the sounds and music. The North English Hubbard originally shot to fame with his excellent tunes on C64 games like the classic *Crazy Comets, Commando, Thing on a Spring, Sanxion* and *Delta*.**



Will that kick be good enough?

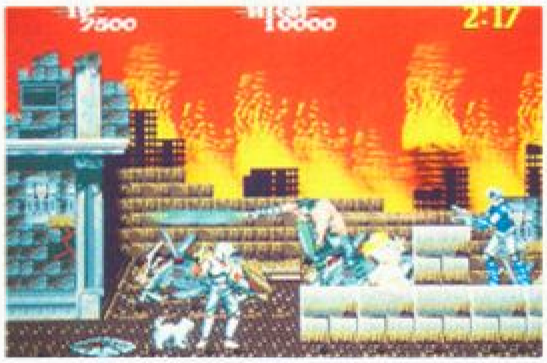


Move closer, boys, it's time to huddle...

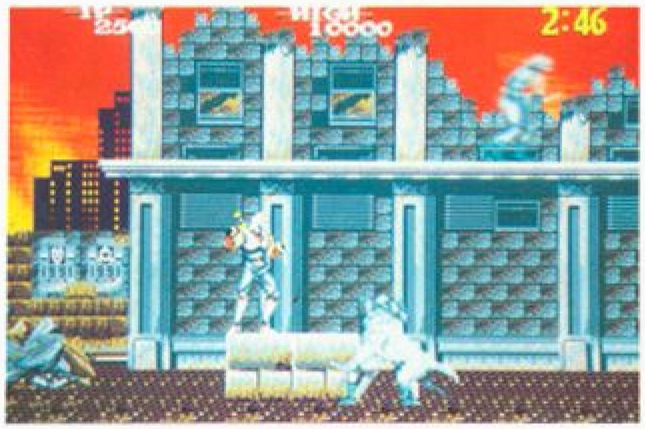
SHADOW DANCER

One man and his dog go to mow a Megadrive

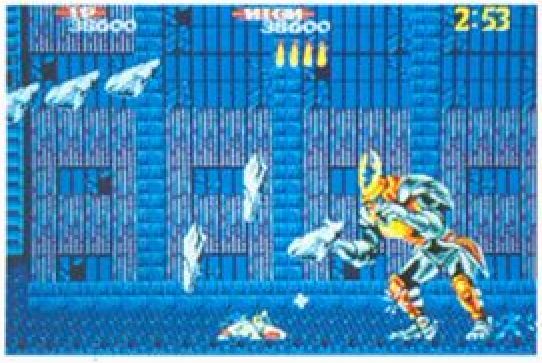
A D. 1997, New York City. Having vanquished the evil crime empire, Neo Zeed, Shinobi was not heard from again. His combat ninja skills were not needed in a peaceful world. But a new threat arose in reptilian form that lived on vicious instinct alone. The colossal monster moved slowly and quietly, and its attack was relentless. The souls unfortunate enough to live became 'hostages'. Mass panic swept the streets."



Oh no! Ninja dog has become a helpless puppy



Don't call my dog a mutt!



The baddie boss at the end of level one

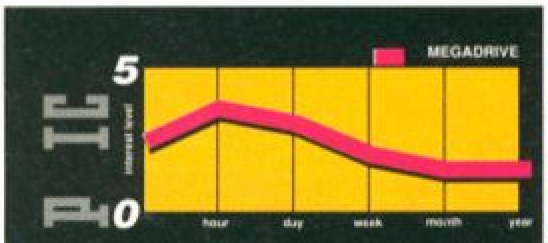
"It remained only for Shinobi to take action, the Ninja of the shadows. His weapons were stealth and quickness of attack. His only allies when facing over-whelming force. Relying on ninja weapons and magic, Shinobi fought on, assisted by his faithful dog. This is the story of their defiance..."

Shadow Dancer, the Secret of Shinobi, is the latest Sega coin-op to be converted over to the Megadrive. You control a nimble ninja on a hazardous multi-stage journey through the streets of the big apple. You're on a rescue mission to save the poor hostages from this mysterious criminal reptile. Along the way you meet masked warriors armed with knifes and spears, pistol touting security guards and long-haired bouncers armed with two deadly shields.

Shinobi can crouch, jump, attack with sword or shuriken, and use a special Ninjutsu magic spell to wipe out who-ever's on-screen. If you keep the attack button pressed down, the ninja dog gets angry enough to charge and attack your nearest enemy. This tactic is particularly useful in dislodging your rivals from their secure hideouts. One nice touch is that your dog doesn't die from weapon-inflicted wounds, it just shrinks down to a harmless puppy.

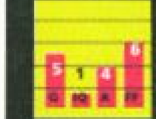
After killing everything on screen apart from the hostages, you get a quick burst of a silly bonus game and a crack at an end-of-level boss monster. I've just one question to ask the developers of these scrolling beat'em-up arcade games - why are they all set in 1997 New York? *Perhaps these are a tribute to John* Carpenter's cult movie, Escape from New York.

● **Rik Haynes**



ACE RATING

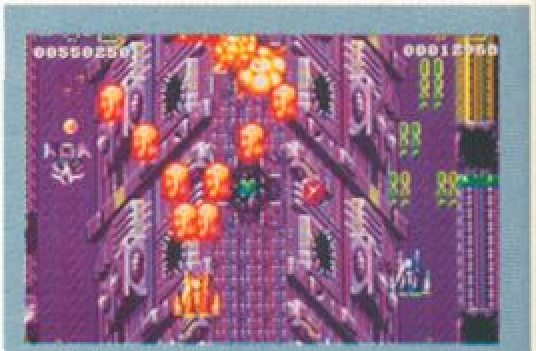
778



MEGADRIVE

Shadow Dancer is an enjoyable enough martial arts romp, but nothing really shouts out at you when playing the game. The graphics have a scratchy look to them - at least your mutt wags its tail in reassuring obedience. The game is packed with funky oriental tunes and jingles (19 to be precise), this music is complemented by 46 spot effects of standard originality and quality. Frustrated ninja's only need apply for this one.

MEGADRIVE £39.99 OUT NOW

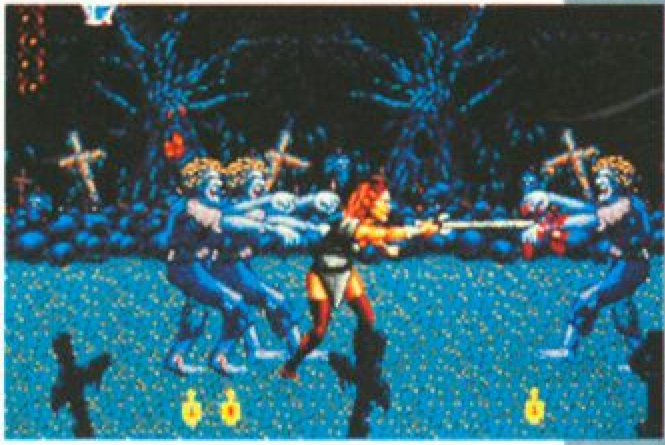


Megadrive *Battle Squadron*

INNERPRISE INITIATIVE

Electronic Arts has converted two celebrated Amiga games from American software company Innerprise onto the Sega Megadrive.

Sword of Sodan is a hack'n'slash game with distinctively large sprites. You play Shardon or Brodan, sibling wards of the legendary warrior Sodan, in a quest to wrest the southern kingdoms from the grip of the evil wizard Zoras. Your path is lined with traps, blocked by towering warriors and steaming with lava. Magic potions can be found to give you extra lives, flaming swords, shields and other mystical powers. Seven different levels provide the differing challenges, ranging from the Bridge of Spikes to the Zombie Graveyard. "Sword of Sodan features realistic hand-to-hand combat and buckets of gushing blood," says EA.



Megadrive *Sword of Sodan*

Meanwhile, if you prefer a shoot'em-up, look no further than Battle Squadron. "This conversion of the smash hit Amiga game features two-player simultaneous team play, arcade-style graphics and a wide variety of enemies ranging from mysterious chameleon ships to mutant Cybersnakes and fierce Nitrogunners," EA offers.

Your mission - should you accept it - is to wipe out the Barrax ground and air forces based on the planet Terrania and rescue fellow flight commanders, Bergin and Mayers. Weapons can be upgraded or changed when you capture jettisoned munitions from destroyed Barraxian gunships. You can also use Nova smart bombs to clear any tanks, planes, beasts and surface gunners in your way. Rob Hubbard has done the Megadrive music conversion.

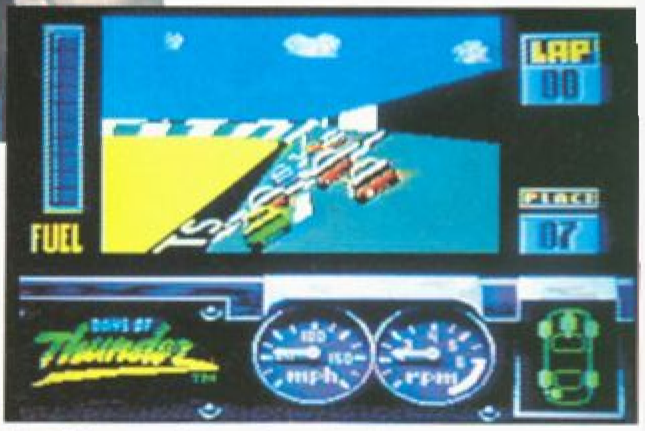
Battle Squadron and Sword of Sodan have just been released on the Megadrive at £39.99 each. Look out for full reviews in the next issue of ACE.

Special thanks to PC Engine Supplies (0782 712759) for supplying the cart.

DAYS OF THUNDER

You saw the movie, you heard the soundtrack, now play the NES game from MINDSCAPE...

Tom Cruise and Robert Duvall fight a war of nerves in the Days of Thunder movie... at least they didn't have to play the game! Days of Thunder © 1990 Paramount



Start of the race and guess where our hero is?

Who needs Tom Cruise when you're around! *Days of Thunder* is based around last summer's movie, a kind of *Top Gun* with stock cars. You take the role of rookie driver Cole Trickle is a race to win the prestigious Daytona event in Florida.

The game is played in an eight-race series cup, with you up against 15 other drivers including the more skillful talents of Rowdy Burns and Russ Wheeler (two of the characters from the original film). The races take place at seven different tracks – you even get the chance to have a go at Daytona Beach in a pre-run to the final race.

Each track varies in length and shape with a preceding four-lap qualifying run to determine your starting position. These twisting, turning tacks give the feeling of racing around a fair ground's wall of death – which frequently they are! If you're not doing that well, your sponsor could even ask you to run a time trial – fail this test and you can kiss that sponsor money goodbye.

Fortunately you don't have to come first in every race to win. The driver who has most points at the end of the eight-race series wins the cup. For instance, you get bonus points if you lead in any lap. The racing season visits tracks around America, from Phoenix to Atlanta.

You see a sightly overhead view of the track – and behind your own car – during the racing. Instrument panels situated around the track keep you updated on your car's fuel, speedometer, tachometer and damage status. You also get additional lap information. The tachometer indicates how hard your engine is working. Your car is capable of speeds up to 200 miles per hour in a long straight-way, though you can't handle curves at this speed. You must make sure you level of damage is kept under control as tire wear and engine damage can dramatically effect your speed. If you blow the tires you'll only be able to coast into the pits and a completely shot engine will put you out of the race.

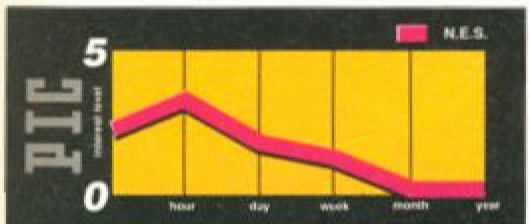
TASTY NASCAR TACTICS

Side-slamming: **cutting off other cars and bumping them aside are legitimate tactics in the game. Just mind you don't crash or cause too much wear and tear on your own car.**
The Pipe-line: **Curve up the bank and plunge down into the inside of the track to give yourself a gravitational boost of speed... while avoiding other drivers doing exactly the same manoeuvre.**
Slipstreaming: **Save fuel by driving close behind a fast moving opponent, you'll be dragged along in its wake. You even get some extra acceleration power when you move out of this slipstream. Races have been won or lost because of this tactic.**

This where pit stops become essential, though you don't want to make that many of them during a race. During a pit stop you can change one to four tires, perform engine repairs and refuel – but each second spent in the pit costs you a precious second on the track.

I'll leave the final words to actor and would-be race driver Tom Cruise... "racing isn't that different from acting. It challenges you physically and mentally. You can't go in and put your foot to the floor and expect to win. You have to think it out."

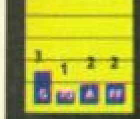
● **Rik Haynes**



Won't stun you on booting up, but as long as it plays well who cares what the aesthetics are like. Ah, it doesn't. 'Cos of all the wonga you paid you'll come back for a bit, but ultimately it's the shelf for you, my cart!

ACE RATING

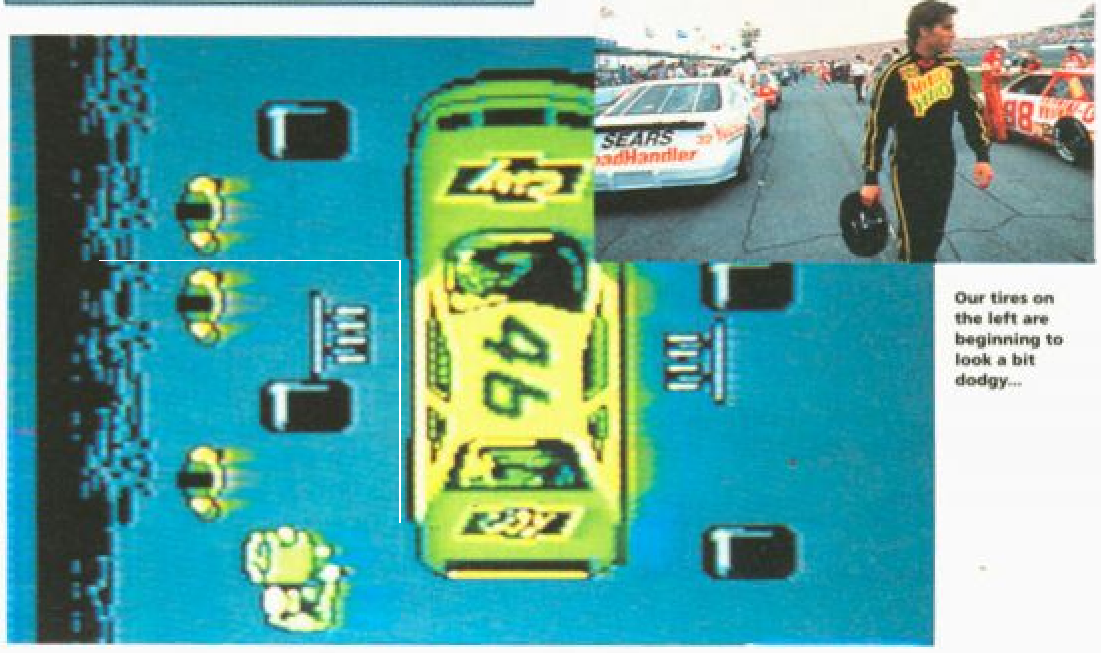
678



N.E.S.

Oh dear, this is a bit of a disappointment. If you've watched NASCAR racing on late-night TV or a satellite sports channel you'll know the only excitement found in the real thing comes when a pile-up occurs... not exactly what you want when you're playing a game. The adequate graphics and sound in Days of Thunder are let down by the poor gameplay. It looks like Hard Drivin' could just get pole position in the race for top NES driving game. Let's hope the Gameboy version of days of Thunder plays a little better.

NES £TBA SPRING '91



Our tires on the left are beginning to look a bit dodgy...

MARIO 4

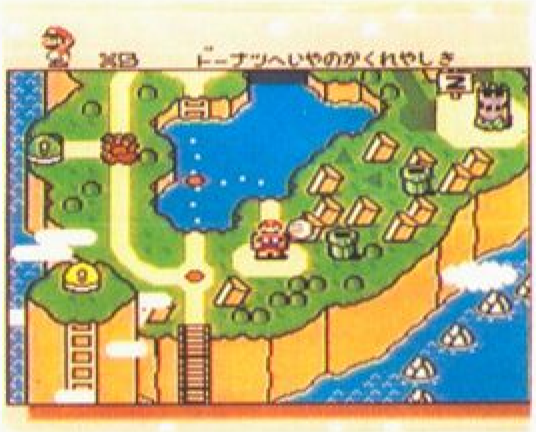
Mario haters will be digging their own graves soon...Rik Haynes checks out the awful truths behind the forthcoming release of Mario 4....

OK. Who wears dungarees, stars in his own TV cartoon series and makes 200 million dollars a year? Yup...you guessed right...

Mario is now 'officially' more popular than Mickey Mouse. Mario's 'Q' rating, which measures a celebrity's popularity among American children and adults, ranks him ahead of Walt Disney's endearing rodent. In five short years, Mario has rapidly transcended video game hero status to become a cultural phenomenon in both North America and Japan.

Mario began his rise to fame with his initial appearance in the classic coin-op, Donkey Kong. However it was Nintendo, the giant Japanese console manufacturer, that turned this cute character into an international cultural icon.

Super Mario Bros. on the Nintendo Entertainment System has sold more than than 18.5 million copies since its introduction in 1986. The game is a simple but highly addictive arcade platform adventure. Super Mario Bros. 2 became a top-selling sequel to the original game, and, nearly a year ago, the third Super Mario Bros. games cartridge was released. Super Mario Bros. 3 was Nintendo's first three-megabit cartridge giving its developers the spare memory for additional gameplay scenarios. It is believed Nintendo, the world's No. 1 games company, sold over 7.5 million copies of Super Mario Bros. 3 by the end of 1990. No wonder Nintendo makes almost as much profit as the most widely-known Japanese corporation, Sony!



A quick look at your progress through the World of Super Mario. Many thanks to our friends at ASCII Corporation in Japan for the pics.

PLAY THESE SPECS!

Here are the SUPER FAMICOM specs. This is what you'll be playing *Mario 4* on...

CPU: Similar to the 65C816 but modified especially for the Super Famicom. It works as fast as a 32-bit processor.

PROCESSOR SPEED: 1.79MHz (checking IO port), 2.68MHz (accessing from ROM), 3.58MHz (accessing from RAM).

MAIN MEMORY: 1Mb.

SCREEN: 512x448 with 256 colours on-screen out of a palette of 32768.

SOUND: 8 channels of 16-bit digital audio at 44KHz.

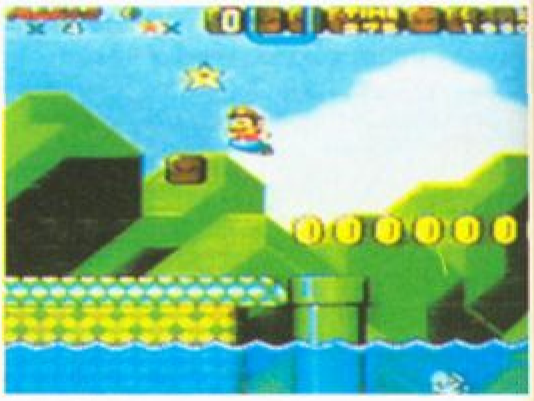
Now the crafty company from Kyoto in Japan has released Super Mario World (Super Mario Bros. 4) onto its new Super Famicom 16-bit console hoping dedicated Mario fans will flock to the shops buying both the game cartridge and console. Not a bad move, eh?

The Mario craze doesn't end with the release of the fourth game either. The huge appeal of Mario has allowed him to go far beyond the world of video games, entering movies, television, books, magazines and an enormously varied range of merchandise. More than 300 licensed products display Mario's likeness, representing some $200 million in annual retail sales in the USA. Items ranging from Mario sleeping bags to cake decorations are available at more than 6000 World of Nintendo retail outlets throughout North America.

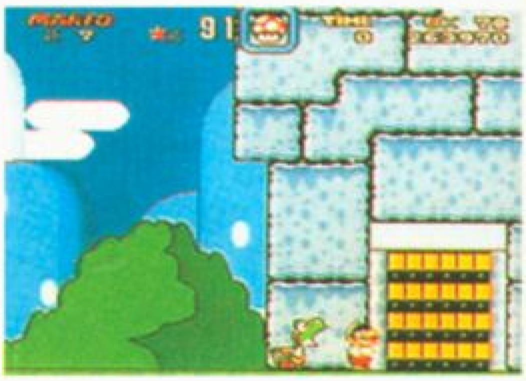
The Super Mario Bros. Super Show is a syndicated comedy adventure series airing on 135 television stations across America, and Super Mario Bros. 3 is a fully-animated TV programme based on the blockbuster game which features the weekly adventures of Mario and Luigi. Plus, there's Captain N – The Game Master cartoon series based around other popular Nintendo video game characters. These three shows form a one hour block of Nintendo television programmes on NBC Saturday Mornings in the States. Insiders even suggest that Hollywood actor Dustin Hoffman owns the movie rights to the Super Mario Bros. games!

Since its launch in 1985, Super Mario Bros. and its sequels have sold more than 20 million copies in America alone. "Mario's popularity transcends age and gender," says Peter Main, part of Nintendo's marketing engine in the States. "Mario may not be the fastest or strongest, but his character embodies a certain kind of spirit which appeals to the underdog in all of us," adds Main. A review of Super Mario World on the Super Famicom will appear in the next issue, once everybody on ACE has had a chance to play the game properly.

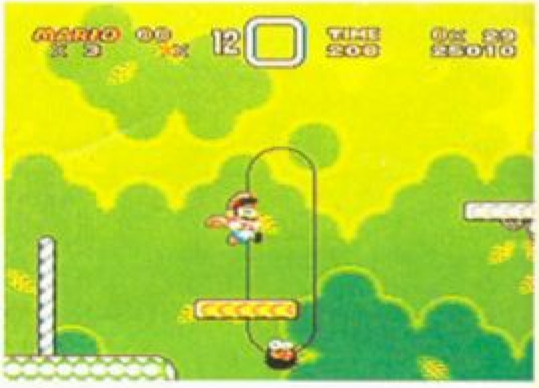
● **Rik Haynes**



Shigeru Miyamoto is the person behind the success of Nintendo's Super Mario games. He has been the producer of all four games, in charge of the best programming and design talent in the Japanese games industry. Note the transparent water at the bottom of the screen, one of the neat visual tricks performed by the Super Famicom's advanced hardware.



Don't forget your faithful friend! Many of the Super Mario Bros. 3 development team also worked on the Super Famicom version of Maxis' Sim City.



Mario's cloak allows him to fly up into the air and out of trouble. In Super Mario Bros. 4 you can save your game allowing you to resume a game you've played before.

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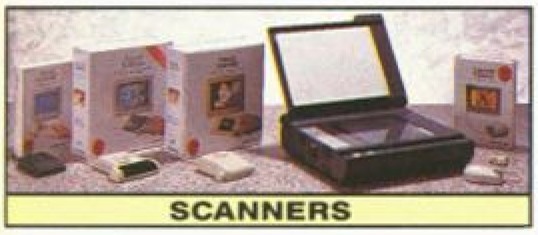
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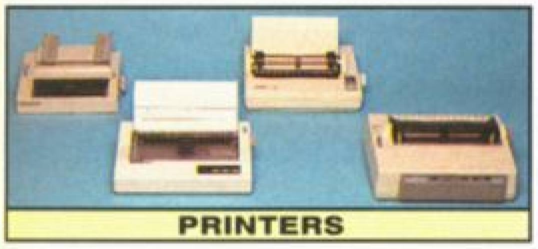
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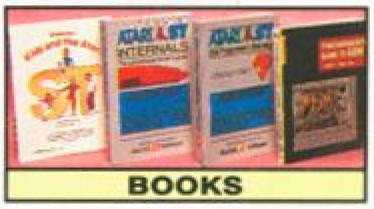
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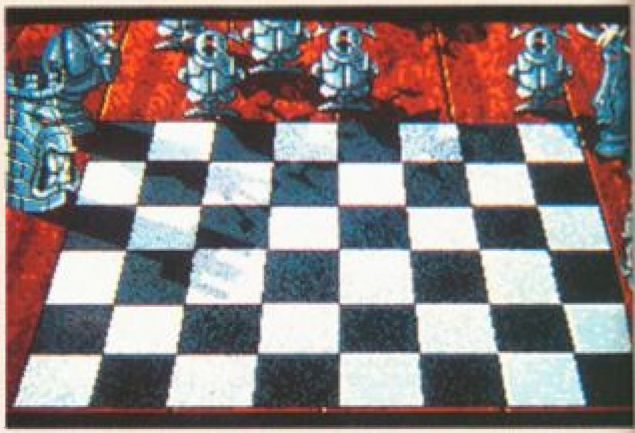
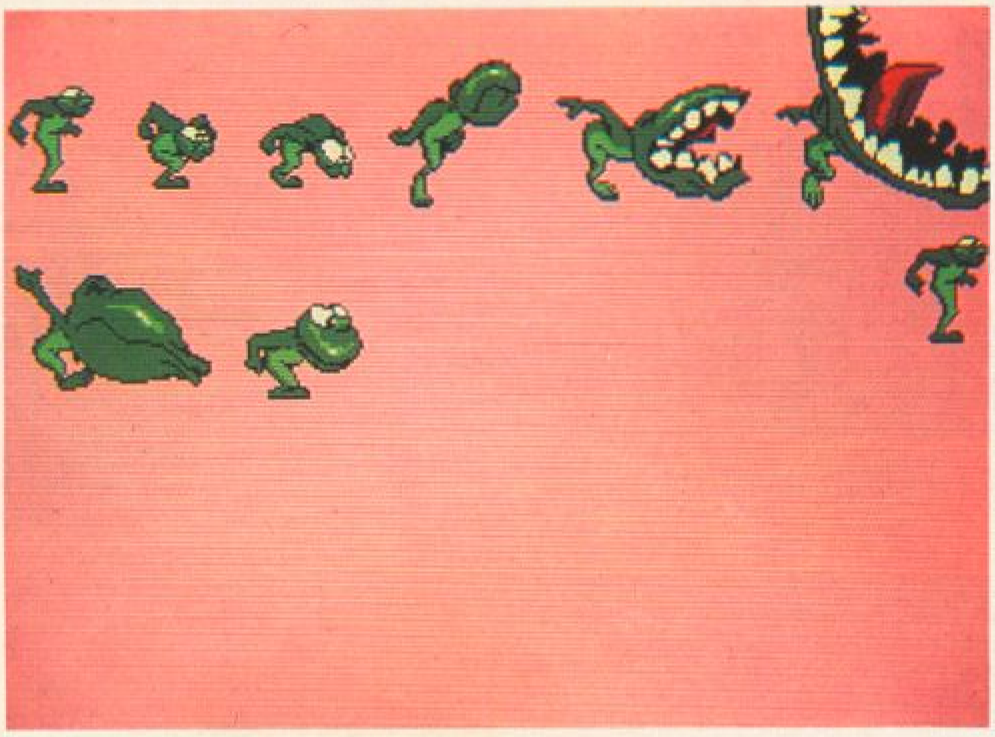
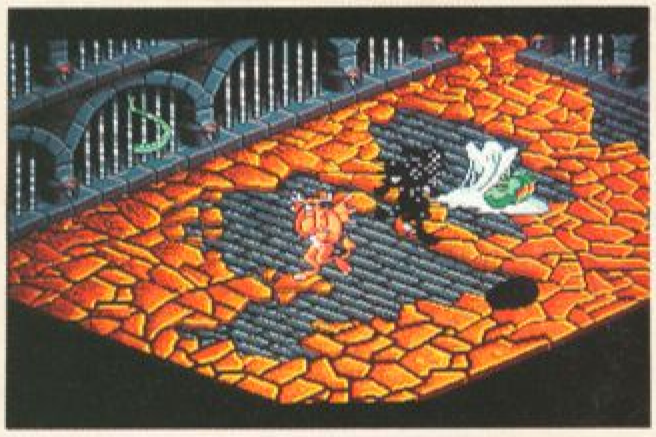


The Chessboard Room. Each square on the board has a special property, some more useful than others. Anyone remember The Adventure Game?



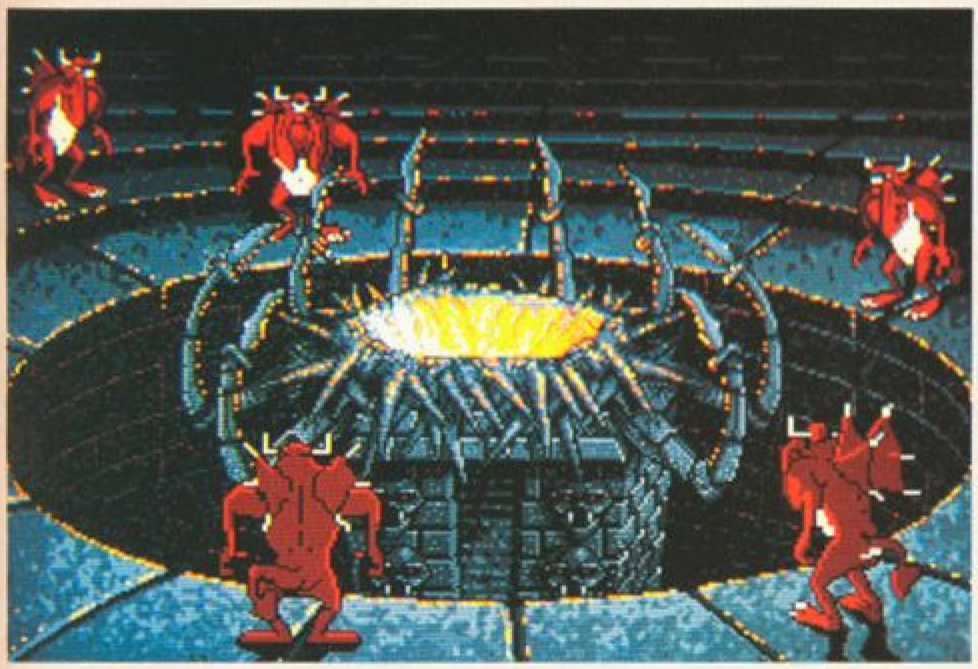


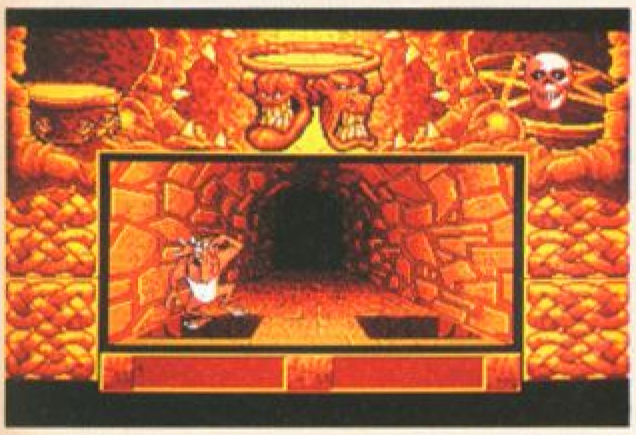
The Room of Shadows is where Mut begins his adventure. If ever there was good reason to be afraid of your own shadow, this is it.

Go to Hell!

Super-cute characters, breath-taking animation and amazing puzzles. Jim Douglas finds Hell isn't so bad after all.

property,
ure Game?





The tunnels link the rooms in the maze, and must be negotiated swiftly but carefully.

HOW IT WORKS

Programmers Jerr O'Carrol (Artist) and Jed Keaveney (Coder) have put the game together using an Amiga 3000. Virtually everything seen on screen is a Dpaint animation file. The only code which will be resident in the game during play is a driver program, pulling the illustrations off the CD as required and handling game logic.

Gremlin's *Littil Divil* has been under development for nearly a year now, and to say the company has been keeping its existence under its hat would be an understatement. Indeed, the game isn't even slated to see the light of day until late next year. So, if it's only half-finished, why does everything look so good?

The storyline centres on Mut and his adventures through Hell. Mut's goal is to thoroughly explore Hell, solving puzzles along the way and in doing so, prove to God that he's a nice enough chap really and should be allowed back into heaven.

Hell is broken down into an infernal set of twisting corridors (displayed in perspective 3D) with rooms leading off. Gameplay, therefore, is broken into two stages. As must runs along the tunnels, he will face arcade-style problems such as collapsing floor-tiles, deadly spikes etc. Magic spells and useful items can also be found in the tunnels. Once in the rooms, though, Mut encounters more puzzle-orientated problems.

Owners of the Dragon's Lair games will no doubt eye the screenshots with suspicion, worrying they they've seen this style of graphic-lead game before, and found it sadly lacking in playability. It's important to point out, then, that no resident memory is expended on the pictures. Gremlin are very aware that they must deliver equally on both counts.

Look forward to a full playtest and review in a future issue, but in the mean time, we'll let the pictures do the talking...

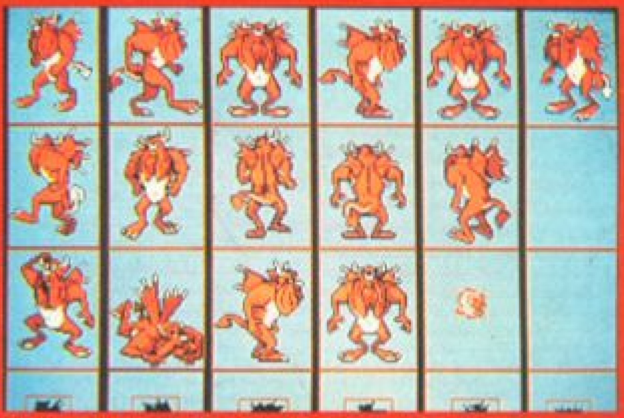
CD OR NOT CD

Basically, non-CD versions of Littil Divil will feature cut-down graphics and music. At present, the programmers are unsure what elements of the game itself will have to be sacrificed. The up-side of this, of course is that CD owners will finally have a game finally written specifically for their machine, rather than a jazzed up version of an existing product.

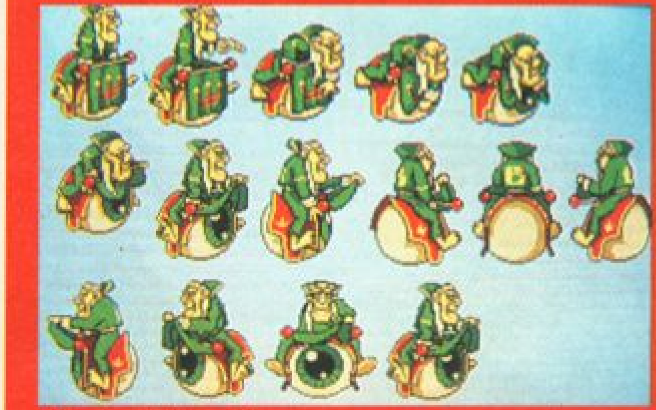
FORMATS: AMIGA, AMIGA CD, ST, PC, PC CD, CONSOLE CD

RELEASE DATE: AUTUMN 91

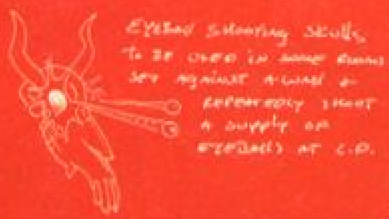
PRICE: UNDECIDED



Our hero! Mut's animations give him some genuine personality.



Baloc, The Evil Eye in action.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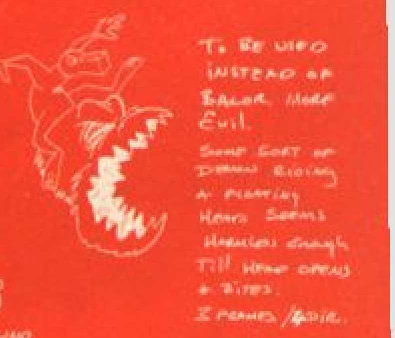
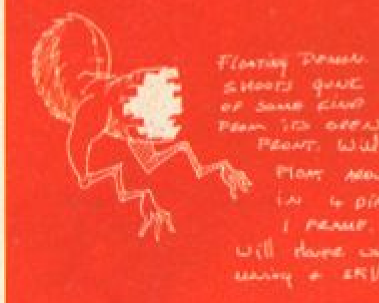
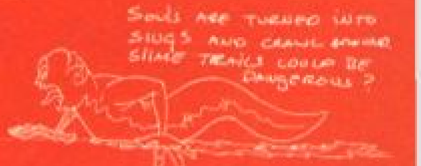
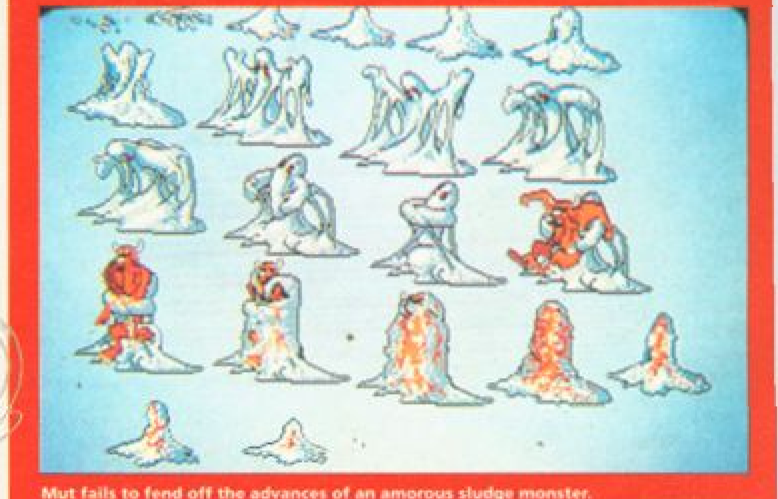
A SUPPLY OF
EYEBALLS AT C.P.


TO BE USED
INSTEAD OF
BALOR. MORE
EVIL.
SOME SORT OF
DEMON RIDING
A FLOATING
HEAD. SEEMS
HARMLESS ENOUGH
TILL HEAD OPENS
& BITES.
3 FRAMES / 4 DIR.


FLOATING DEMON.
SHOOTS GUNK
OF SOME KIND
FROM ITS OPEN
FRONT. WILL
FLOAT AROUND
IN 4 DIR.
1 FRAME.
WILL HOVER WHEN
MOVING & SKY


SOULS ARE TURNED INTO
SLUGS AND CRAWL AROUND
SLIME TRAILS COULD BE
DANGEROUS ?



Mut fails to fend off the advances of an amorous sludge monster.

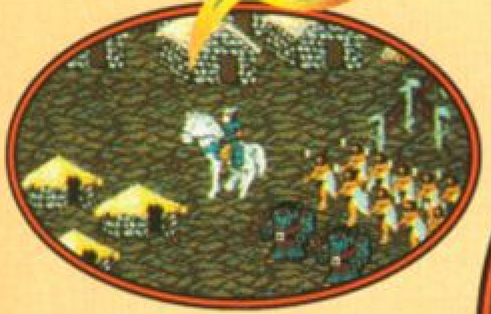
RAINBIRD

A WEB OF INTRICATE POSSIBILITIES - BUT FAIR PLAY ISN'T ONE OF THEM

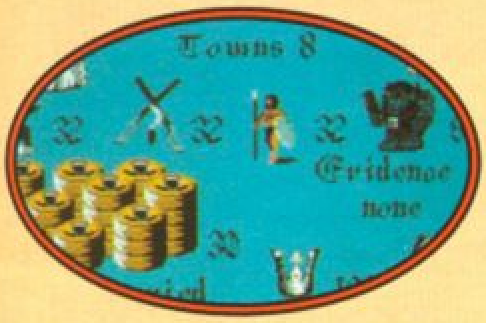
MASTERS OF STRATEGY

A WEB OF INTRICATE POSSIBILITIES - BUT FAIR PLAY ISN'T ONE OF THEM

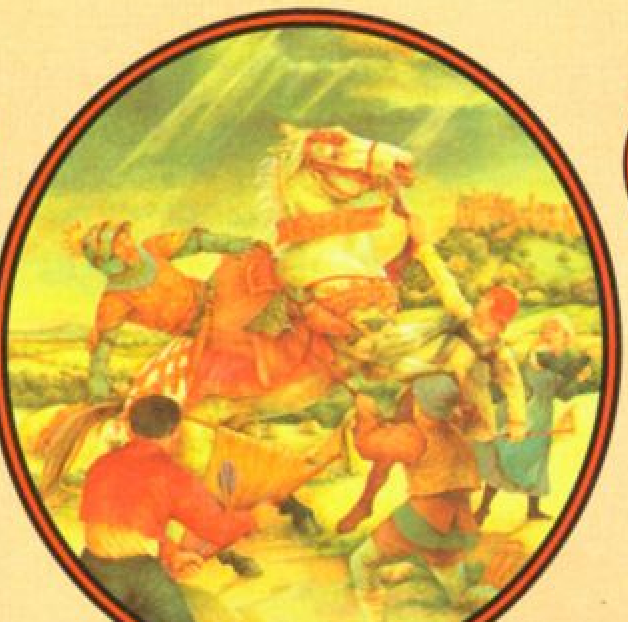
BETRAYAL



The West Marches is a corrupt land ruled by immoral leaders. You are one of four Knights with a lust for power. And in the pursuit of power, the end justifies the means.

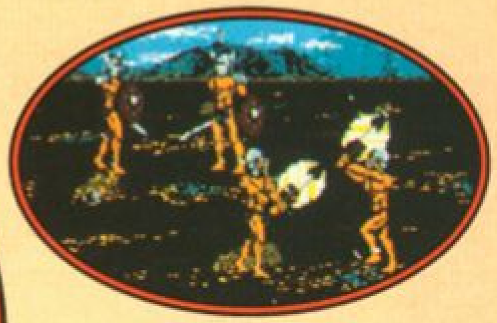


The towns provide your power base. Manage them successfully, and harvest the wealth needed to buy, bribe and fight for ultimate power.

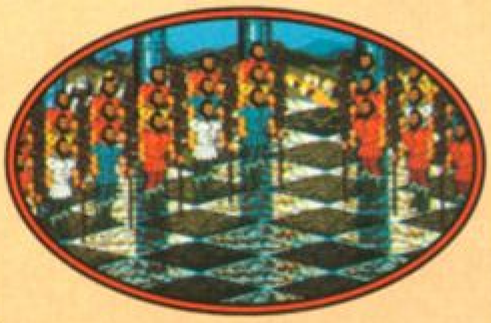


Betrayal involves a long, hard, ruthless struggle, starting with the economic management of your towns and cultivation of your lands, culminating in the honing of your military strategy and execution of political subterfuge.

BETRAYAL
A HELL OF A GOD GAME



The bloodiest battles yield the greatest spoils. Strategically extend your domain, reduce your rivals' resources, and tighten your stranglehold on the peasants of the land.



Develop a mastery of political subterfuge, gaining places for your Courtiers at the palaces of the King and Bishop, ready for the coup which will make you the master of Betrayal.

A new barrel of fine Welsh ale had just been broached. The royal palace's smoky dining hall resounded to cheery voices. To one side of the top table a harpist and a minstrel were struggling to be heard above the commotion caused by two dogs snarling over a bone in a corner.

Eating slowly, I leant forward to catch the breathless whisper of a rival knight.

'They came in at a run, baying like wolves. Four wild-eyed barbarians ready to cut, gouge, pulverise and kill anything that moved.'

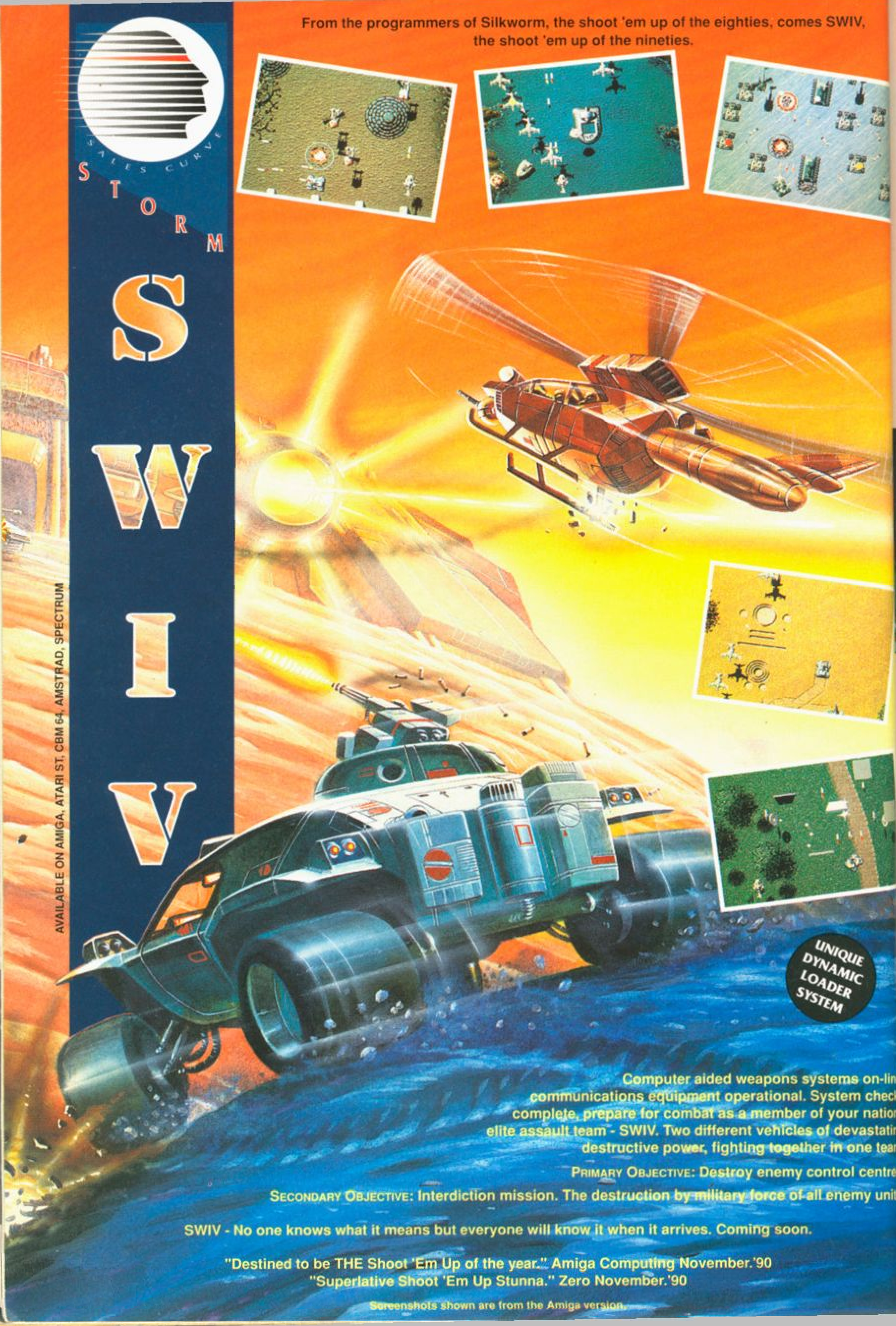
That news was indeed music to my ears. My forces' attack on his wealthiest town had met with success. Financially weakened, militarily broken, and politically bankrupt, he could no longer hold influence at Court.

So long as no evidence of my wrong doing remained. So long as the Gods blessed the crops of my harvest. So long as the rumours of the capture of my brother were true. The throne was mine.

I've cheated, lied, spied and slaughtered. The fruits of Betrayal are mine.

RAINBIRD

From the programmers of Silkworm, the shoot 'em up of the eighties, comes SWIV, the shoot 'em up of the nineties.



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SECONDARY OBJECTIVE: Interdiction mission. The destruction by military force of all enemy units

SWIV - No one knows what it means but everyone will know it when it arrives. Coming soon.

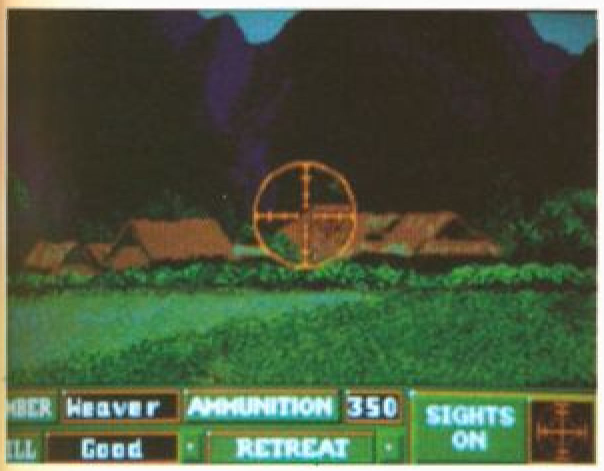
"Destined to be THE Shoot 'Em Up of the year." Amiga Computing November.'90
"Superlative Shoot 'Em Up Stunna." Zero November.'90

Screenshots shown are from the Amiga version.

Two extra missions disks and a host of recent conversions. This month's updates are brought to you on the PC, ST and Amiga.

UPDATES

PC



Lost Patrol on the IBM PC

LOST PATROL

Ocean £24.99 ; Amiga version reviewed issue 30; ACE rating deferred

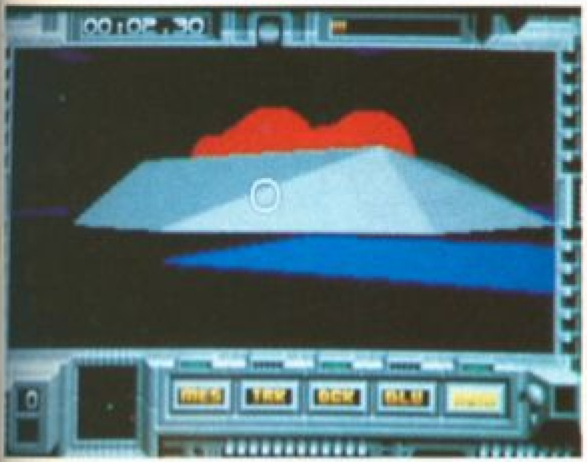
Lost Patrol was extensively previewed in issue 30, but since it was unfinished no rating was awarded.

The game is a Vietnam War graphic adventure with arcade sequences. You have to command a platoon of stranded American GIs, making their way through VC-occupied territory on their way back to base.

The PC version, on three 3.5 inch disks, has some excellent semi-animated VGA graphics, combining map screens with icon-driven command functions, atmospheric pictures of the grunts slogging their way through the jungles and paddy fields and the Vietnamese they encounter, and various status screens and explanatory diagrams of the equipment and they use.

The let-down is the arcade sequences, where the GIs encounter VC snipers, machine-gun nests and so on. Poorly-drawn and offering little challenge, they detract from the strategy elements rather than adding any arcade excitement. Sound is basic, with no add-on sound cards supported.

PC RATING: 630



Interphase on the IBM PC

INTERPHASE

Image Works £24.99 ; Atari ST/Amiga version reviewed issue 27; ACE rating 915

This very impressive 3-D vector graphic arcade adventure has converted well to the PC. The action takes place inside the memory of a computer security system, with different sections manifesting themselves as colourful, smoothly-animated geometrical shapes, tunnels and open spaces which you can explore freely. There are also 2-D building blueprints to examine in magnified form, scanners to monitor, messages to decode, puzzles to solve and defences to avoid.

Graphics are very colourful, smoothly-animated and fast moving - if anything, better animated than those of the Amiga and ST. The PC version comes on a single 3.5 or 5.25 inch disk, and supports all colour graphics modes. It also supports the AdLib sound board.

A top-class conversion of a classic 3-D arcade adventure.

PC RATING: 910

ATF II

Digital Integration £24.99 ; Atari ST/Amiga version reviewed issue 40; ACE rating 680/690

ATF (Advanced Tactical Fighter) II is half-way between being a flight simulator and an arcade game; it has more briefing, set-up and option screens than you would expect of a shoot-'em-up, but less detail than you would expect from a true simulation. In that sense it falls between two stools and may satisfy neither arcade or simulation fans. The PC version has most of the features of the Amiga and ST versions; colourful graphics and control panels, and fast-scrolling checkerboard backgrounds with the minimum of animation and background detail.

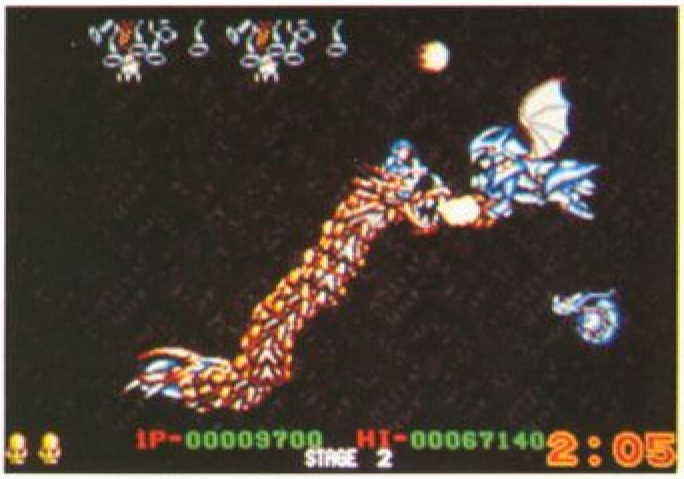
VGA graphics are comparable in colour and style to those of the Amiga, while CGA and Tandy four-colour are no more than adequate. Sound is basic, and add-on sound cards are not supported. The manual doesn't properly explain all the PC keyboard controls, and the mouse functions don't always seem to work, which is no help. Not the best imaginable PC conversion, inheriting the basic faults of the other versions.

PC RATING: 610

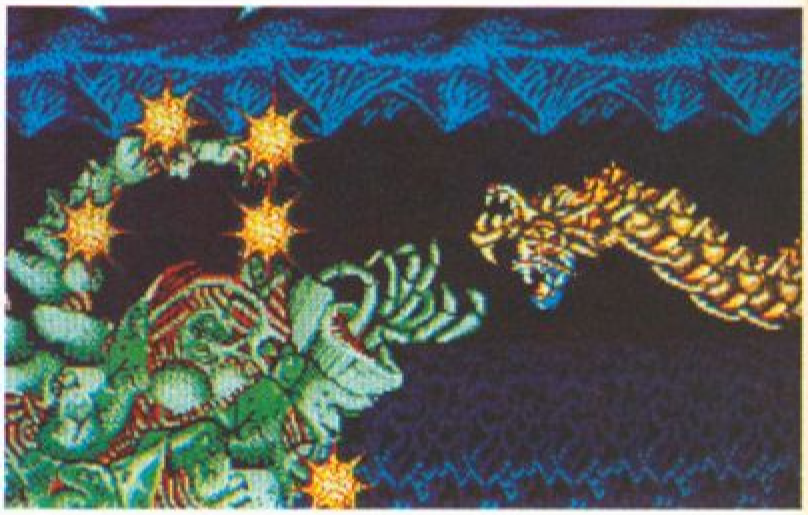
FREE HEIGHT

MISSION BRIEFING

ENEMY CURRS LOCKED
SPEED



Dragon Breed on the Amiga



AMIGA

DRAGON BREED
Activision £24.99 ; AtariST Version reviewed Issue 40; ACE rating 720

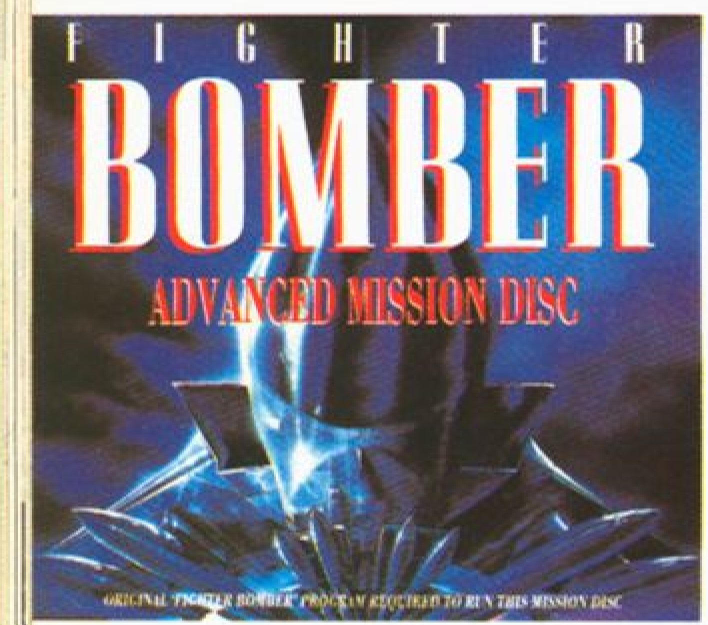
Like the ST version, the Amiga version of Irem's swords-and-sorcery version of R-Type is horrifically difficult, which can be a good or bad point depending on your inclination. Gameplay is noticeably smoother; piloting your fire-breathing dragon through the skies, you wipe out endless demons with the help of your crossbow, dragonbreath and other magical weapons. On the Amiga version it's definitely easier to get the dragon's tail into its mouth.

The other differences in the Amiga version are slightly improved sound, although the strange roaring coming from destroyed demons rapidly becomes irritating; and an unfortunate pause for disk access before each end-of-level demon appears.

Scrolling and sprite movement are fine, but not much has been done to take full advantage of the Amiga's superior graphics.

AMIGA RATING: 740

EXTRA DISKS EXTRA!


FIGHTER
BOMBER
ADVANCED MISSION DISC
ORIGINAL 'FIGHTER BOMBER' PROGRAM REQUIRED TO RUN THIS MISSION DISC

This month the postman's bulging sack yielded two extra missions disks for rather good games and so, in the spirit of the flexible magazine ACE endeavours to be, here's Extras Update.

FIGHTER BOMBER
Advanced Missions Disk £29.99; ST Activision

Fighter Bomber's advanced missions disks offers a storming 16 new missions to undertake. On top of this, some efforts have gone into enhancing the graphics from the original game, with the additions of extra landmarks like radar towers and trucks to liven up the landscape. Loading is relatively simple with the programmers, Vektor Graphics managing to pack all the missions onto one disk.

There's even a mission design option allowing you to create your own landscapes with specific targets to either spot or destroy. It has to be said, though that at almost £30, you should be sure that you're thoroughly addicted to Fighter Bomber's concept before purchase.

ACE RATING 820

DAMOCLES MISSIONS DISK
Novagen £9.99

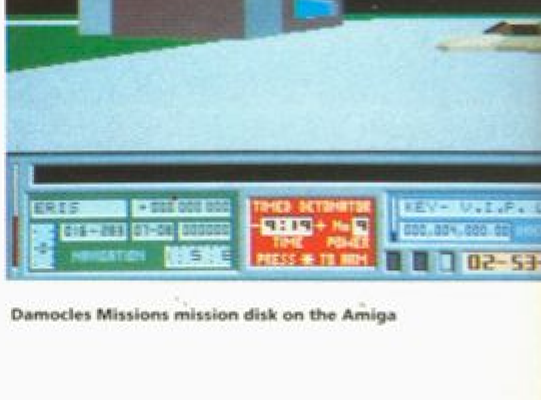
Owners of the highly acclaimed Damocles now have five extra missions to explore thanks to original author Paul Woakes. The missions offer a variety of game styles from frantic races against the clock through an adventure featuring another mercenary who's always one step ahead to a paranoid nightmare where, just when you thought you'd completed the game, you find the rug comprehensively pulled from under your feet.

On loading, a breakdown of each mission appears along with a step-by-step explanation and even a solution if you want it. From within the main game, each mission is loaded through the Save Game option.

Rather than simple being more of the same, the variety of pace in the missions means that you can play whichever style of game you want. Mission 1 is a ten-minute dash.

Familiarity with Damocles obviously means that you're more at home with the controls, but beginners, when presented with both the game and the extra missions should experience little difficulty getting started.

ACE RATING: 800



Damocles Missions mission disk on the Amiga

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BATMAN PACK

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AMIGA 2000

For the more serious or professional applications user, Commodore have a selection of systems based around the expandable Amiga 2000, at prices from £1295+VAT. The A2000 features a full 1Mb RAM (expandable to 9Mb), 9 system expansion slots, plus IBM compatibility with the use of PC-XT or PC-AT bridgeboards. Complete and return the coupon, putting a tick in the A2000 box, for details of A2000 computer systems.

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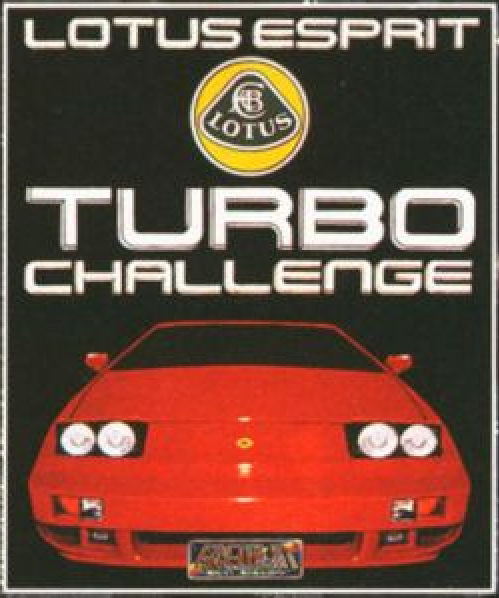
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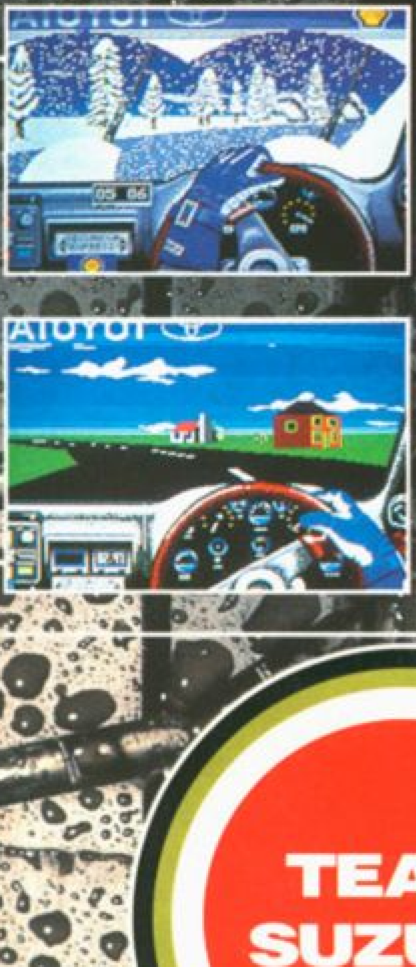

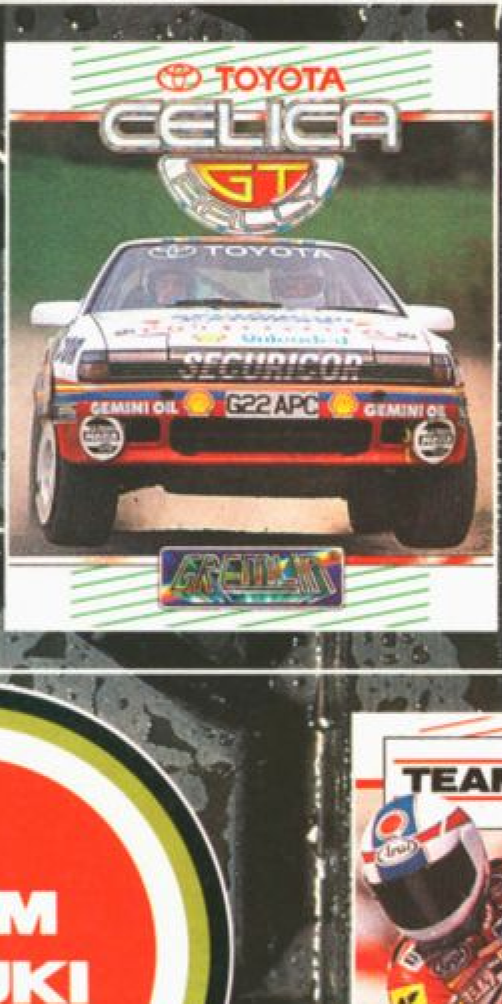
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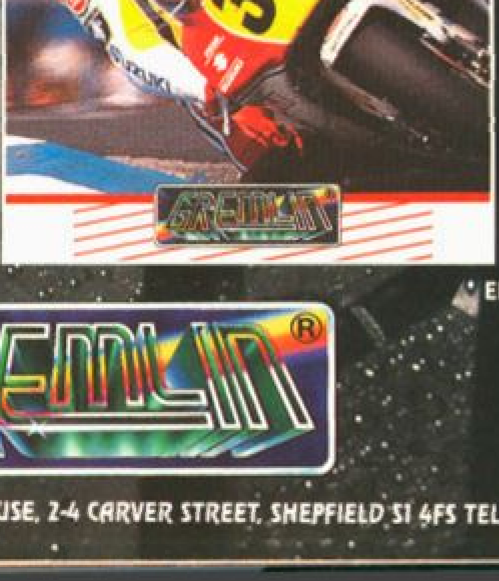
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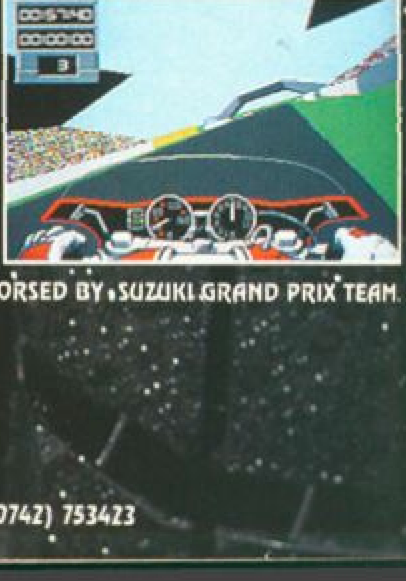

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Tricks 'n' Tactics

Welcome, game fiends, to another T'n'T. Over the page, you'll find an in-depth analysis of last month's topper, Prince of Persia, a further burst of Xenomorph information and a batch of mini-tips to help get you started on a host of games. But now...

Drakken

Adam Morely continues from the end of level 3...

Level 4

This stage requires you to enter the frozen wastes of the nores, and travel to Prince Nakhtkhen's Ice Palace, (if you have not entered the dungeon area in stage three you will be unable to enter this palace). When you reach the palace go straight in. You will find that it too has been attacked and that only one sevant remains. He tells you to make your way to Princess Nakhtkha's palace in the west.

Level 5

The best way to reach this palace is to follow the road westward from Prince Nakhtkhen's palace. Go over the cross-road and keep heading directly west. After quite a while you'll reach Nakhthen's palace. Go over the cross-road and keep heading directly west. After quite a while you'll reach Nakhtkha's little den of iniquity.

Enter the palace and operate the symbol to the right of the doorway. Send your warrior through the opening and wait until he or she has defeated the Drakh knight. Then send the other characters through. From here you should unlock the doors with a spell and go right, into the armoury. Equip your characters, if necessary and then send your warrior and scout into the room below, followed by your protected magic users. (Spell 7).

After defeating the enemies here, enter the next room along with your scout - invisible if possible - ignore the Drakh Lord there and enter the room below this one. You'll probably find another Drakh Lord here. Ignore him too. Cast an unlock spell or use a jey on the door in the left-hand wall and then resutn to the others. Then take your warrior and sorcerer, make them invisible (spell 3) and lead them both past the Drakh Loreds until you reach the door your scout opened last. Send the warrior through and reenage combat mode. Then you need to follow the palace map until you reach the red room right at the bottom. Here you will find Princess Hordthka. Make sure you aren't on attack mode when you enter this room.

Once you've freed her it's time to leave. Retrace your steps, join up with your scout and priest and then leave.

Level 6

When you leave, head south until you reach the marshy zone, then follow the map until you come to Princess Haaggkha's pagoda style palace. Enter and then quickly operate the symbol to the right of the doorway to shut off the force-field. Go through into the next room and then send one of your characters, preferably your warrior, into the room ahead.

Follow the palace map until you reach the hall before the red room. Switch off your combat mode and make sure that you have room for another item in your item's list. Even if it means that you must rid yourself of an important piece of equipment, then enter.

Inside you'll find Princess Haaggkha. If you question her she will give you a list of instructions and a special weapon (+2 Drags). Once you have the weapon you should leave, return to the others and then leave the palace.

You may, however, wish to get hold of another powerful weapon and some armour. To do this you should send one or two of your characters to the bottom room of the palace map. In the room before the dragon you will find four mechanisms; set them to the numbers shown by using the operate and examins commands and then enter the dragon's lair. Be careful not to get incincerated and go through the door in the botto of the room. You will now be inside a dank cave containing another Drags, a suit of armour, a rind and a Vial!

Questionner
Actionner
Inspecter
Prendre
Dormir
Controle

Level 7

Follow the map until you are back at Prince Hordtkhen's palace again, enter it and make your way towards his chamber. Make sure your warrior is using the special Drags weapon and make him or her invisible. Then send them into the Princes chamber and kill him.

Using this new weapon should make thins relatively easy. If you fall through, simple reload from your saved position before entering the palace and have another go.

Level 8

When hordtkhen is no longe in the land of the living, leave his palace and go bacl to Haaggkha's little mansion. Send your warrior to see her again and she will congratulate you and give you the next part or your mission.

No more this month. You'll have to fend for yourselves for another 28 days, Drakkers.

Shadow of the Beast 2

Now, from where we we left off last time, Daniel Vernon picks up the story...

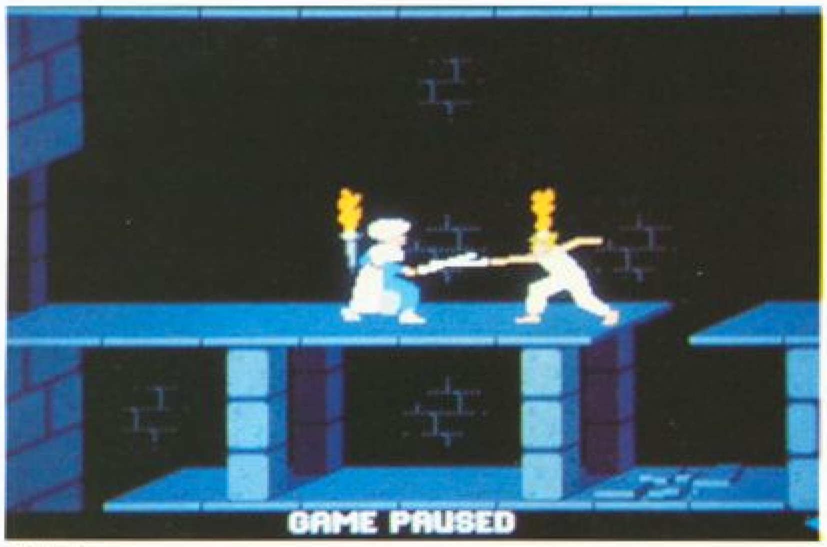
You should now be in jail. Offer the guard the drink. Now break out and kill the guard. Collect the key he drops . Climb up the light and jump off at the first ledge on the left. Use the key to release the prisoner. Walk right back onto the chain. Climb on the top and jump left. Now kill the guards and pick up the ring. Run right and jump to where the prisoner is trying to escape. Use the key and then run to the right. Go out up the steps where you came in.

Go right until you reach a bridge. He should fall through it. Now run right and offer the ring to the old man. Then give him the parchment. Collect the weapon and walk left. Fall down the hole into the river. After you have been through the whirlpool, run right. Drop down, run right. Get onto the rope and jump onto the other side. Collect the horn. Jump back onto the rope and climb down.

Go right to the snail and ask about Karamoon. Answer Yes to both his questions. Now run right and kill the two creatures. Keep on going right, drop off the ledge and go right past the creature coming out of the tree stump. Use the horn, climb onto the creature's back and you'll travel to the other side of the water. Now run right into a castle, down some steps and keep going until you find Zekel. Kill him with the new weapon and you'll have completed the game. Well done!

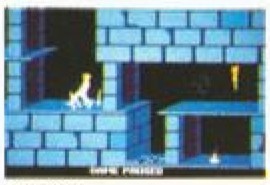
TNT

Prince of Persia Special!



Picture 3

For all you Princes stuck in the Sultan's dungeons, we've worked long and hard and cracked the game. So here's a step by step guide to the first four slashin' levels.



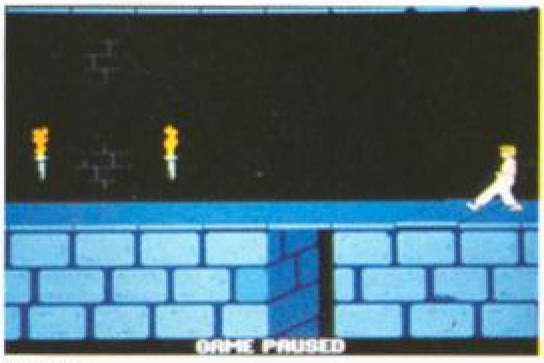
Picture 4

level I

Walk right, fall down and then walk right. Don't fall with the slab, but instead hang onto the ledge and lower yourself down. Exit on the left. Run to the left, jump the chasm and land on the slightly elevated slab. This will open the portcullis. Exit through the portcullis. Run left, drop from the ledge and run right, treading on the elevated slab. Jump left over the chasm. Be careful of the falling slab. Exit through the portcullis.

Run left over the falling slabs, drop down and exit left. Tread on the elevated slab to open the portcullis. Take a run up and use the falling slab over the chasm to jump over the portcullis closing slab. *(See picture 1)* Exit left. Jump the chasm, stand on the falling slab and fall down. Exit left. Drop down and pick up the sword. Exit right.

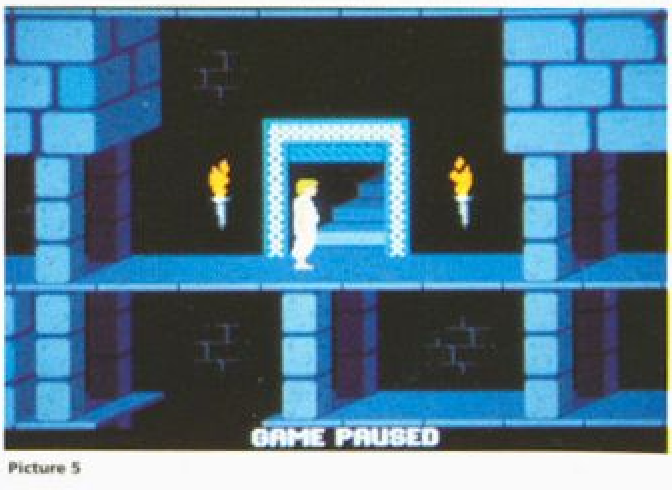
Restrace your steps back to the second screen (where you landed after lowering yourself down). Exit right. Fight the swordsman. *(See swordfighting tips)* Exit right. Hang from the ledge to open the door. Exit through the door. *(See picture 2)*



Picture 1

GAME PAUSED

Picture 2



Picture 5

level 2

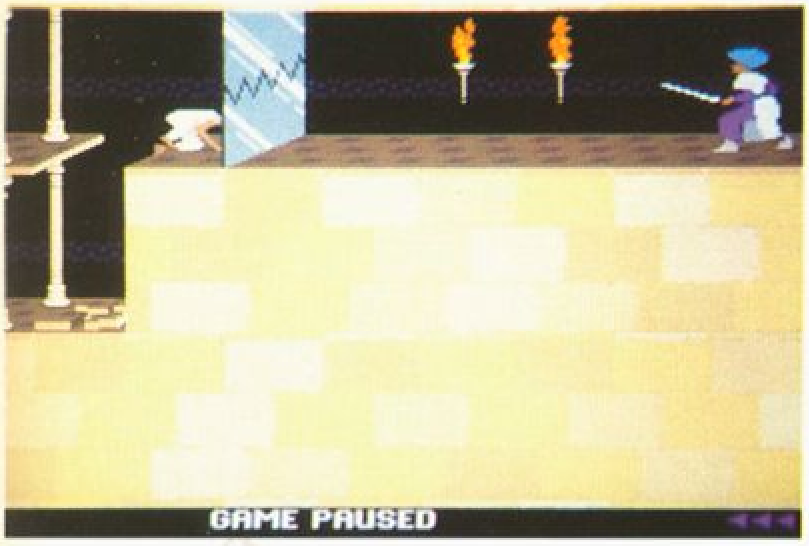
Exit left carefully. Run left and fight swordsman. *(See picture 3)* Exit left. Run left until you reach the falling slab. Take the potion if you need it, tiptoe through the spikes and exit left. *(See picture 4)* Climb onto the second level, then take a running jump at the chasm. Tiptoe to the edge of the ledge and turn left. Jump up and exit top. Climb up and exit left. Fight swordsman and tread on elevated slab. Exit through open portcullis.

Run left. Jump over portullis-closing slab and exit left. Walk left and drop down. Fight swordsman. Exit left. Run left through open portcullis. Don't drink grey potion. Climb ledge and exit left. Leap over chasm and fight swordsmen.

Exit left. Run and exit left. Run left but slow down to get through the spikes. Jump over the chasm and exit top. Run around and jump back. Exit right. Climb onto the ledge, fight the swordsman and exit left. Run past the door and exit left. Jump over the chasm and land on the elevated slab to open the door. Jump back over the chasm and exit right. Exit through the door. *(See picture 5)*

GAME PAUSED

Picture 6



Picture 11

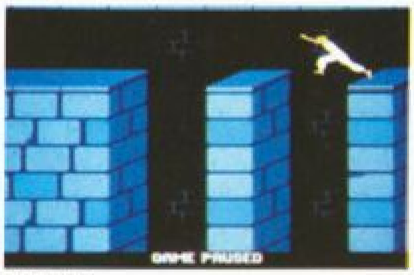
level 3

Exit right. Climb up twice, turn around and jump over to the right. Walk to the right ledge, turn around and climb up. Exit top.

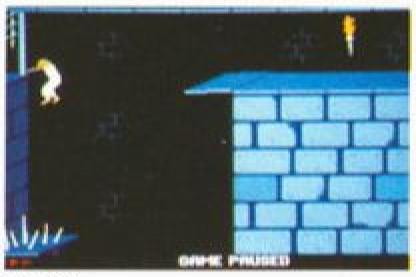
Climb up twice, turn around and jump off the screen to the right. *(See picture 6)* Walk to the ledge and jump across the chasm. Jump across the second chasm, opening a portcullis off screen. Turn around and jump back across both chasms. *(See picture 7)* **START RUNNING!** Jump off the left of the screen. Run and exit left.

Run left and jump chasm. Continue to run left. Run left, jump over the chasm and grab onto the ledge at the other side. Pull yourself up and exit left. *(See picture 8)* Drink potion if you need it. Exit left. Run left and drop down. Climb up (opening the portcullis) and exit left. Run left, stop before the chopping blades and run through them. Drop down twice and exit bottom.

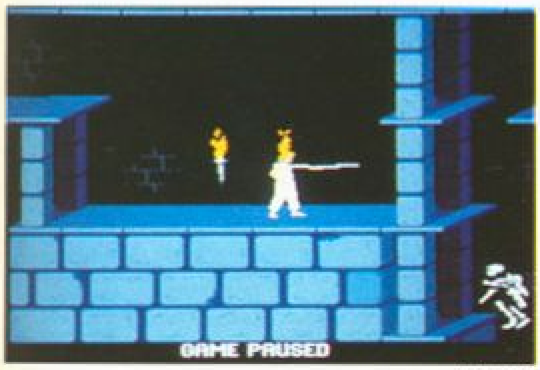
Run right, tread on the panel opening the door. Turn around and run back left. Climb up and exit top. Climb up again, and go through the blades. Exit right. Walk to the edge of the ledge, turn around and lower yourself down. Walk right, fight the skeleton and gradually *(See picture 9)* work him right off the edge. Climb down and exit bottom. Fight the skeleton again, working him further left, 'til he falls through the floor. Exit left. Exit through the door. *(See picture 10)*



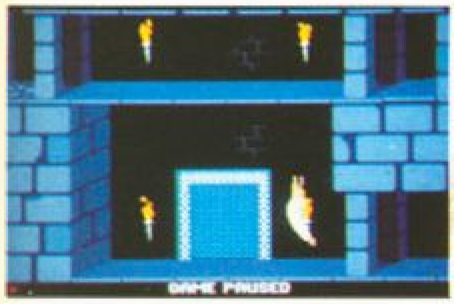
Picture 7



Picture 8



Picture 9



Picture 10

level 4

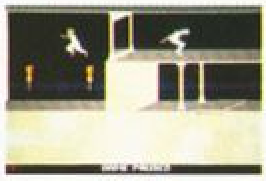
Walk right, tread on the elevated panel, turn around and exit left through the portcullis. Walk left, drop down, land on the elevated panel (opens portcullis) climb up and exit left. Step on the elevated panel, jump over the inset panel and exit left through the portcullis. Walk left, causing both slabs to fall and climb up through open portcullis.

Exit left. Run through the teeth and drink the potion and exit right. Jump over holes and exit (carefully) right. Run and exit right. Walk right and climb down. Walk right and exit. Walk right, drop down and drink the potion if you need it. Climb up and exit right. Walk right, drop down, climb up on the right, walk through the teeth and fight the swordsman. *(See picture 11)*

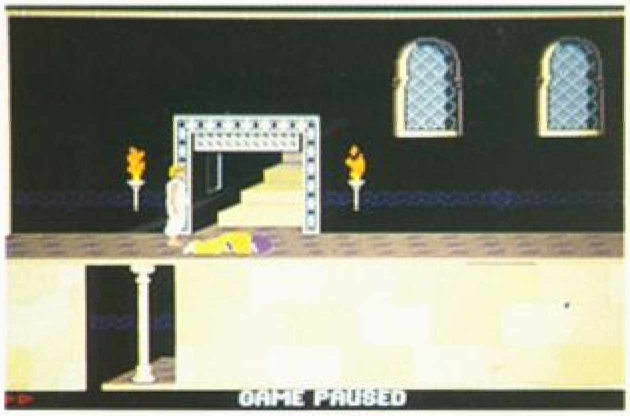
Exit right. Walk right and climb up. Exit top. Climb up and jump right over chasm. Exit right. Run right and walk through the spikes and exit right. Fight the swordsman and exit right. Walk right, go and collect the potion if you need it.

Exit right. Walk right, climb up and exit right. Walk right, climb down, walk through the teeth, exit left. Step on the elevated platform and exit right. Walk back through the teeth. Climb up and exit left. Run left and jump through the mirror. *(See picture 12)* Run left, jump over the hole and exit left. Exit through the door. *(See picture 13)*

Congratulations! You have now completed four levels of The Prince.



Picture 12



Picture 13

SWORDSMEN

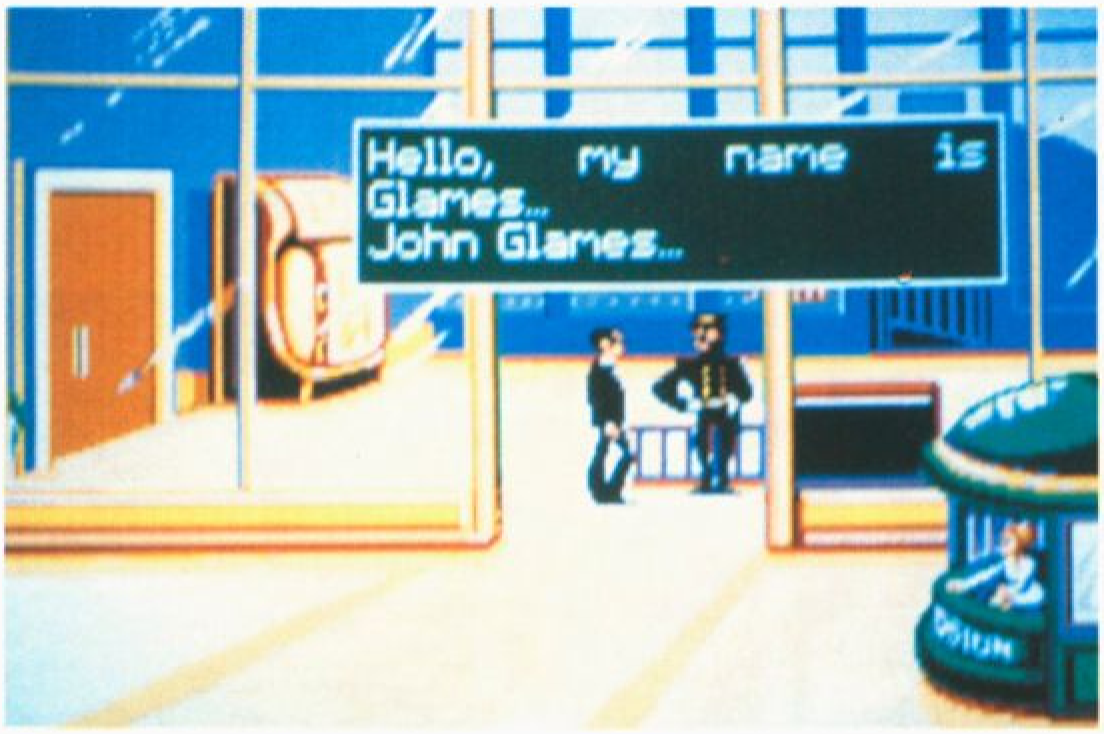
In general, the swordsmen don't offer a particularly stiff challenge. They tend, instead, to catch you in tricky positions, forcing you backwards off ledges and onto spikes etc. The only really tough swordsman is found at the end of Level 6. The best policy to adopt is one of caution. Wait for the guard to make his move and then strike. After a successful hit, advance and strike again immediately. Don't stand around swinging your sabre unnecessarily.

PITS AND CHASMS

When you find yourself dropping down a pit, hold down the fire button and try to cling onto a passing ledge. In later levels, this sort of business is absolutely necessary.

SPIKES 'N' TEETH

Spikes are found generally at the bottom of pits. If you fall down a pit towards some spikes, you're dead. If there are spikes on the floor, however, walking through them at normal speed will see you through. Evading the teeth is simply a matter of timing.



Hello, my name is Glames... John Glames...

Operation Stealth

From where we left off last time:

The Final Stretch

You will now be in a mens' toilet. Operate soldier, take army boots, examing the boots & you will find laces. Use the laces on the soldier. Take the napkin. Use the napkin on soldier. Take clothes. Examine sink and take the glass. Exit the room, go left and down, enter the room in the center. Operate all drawers and examine them. You will find a blank stamp and some more laces.

Use laces on John. Exit room, go right. Now enter the room in the middle. Examine clothes. Take mission instructions. Use glass on fountain, operate the garbage dump. You'll now find a lifeboat. Exit room, go right and up. You will now be asked to fetch a glass of water. Go up the screen and left until you come to the room in which you tied up the soldier. Enter the room on the right.

When you get into this room, there will be an officer. If you look carefully you will see a stamp on his desk. Stand next to it. Use the glass on officer. When his back is turned, take the stamp on his desk and exit the room. Now go to the room where you found the lifeboat & mission instructions. Now examine around the armchair until you find an inkpad.

Use stamp on inkpad. Now use inkpad on mission instructions. Operate cigarette case. Now examine all cigarettes in the case. Now operate the blue one. You will be just left with the paper. Now use cig paper on glass. You will now get a fingerprint. Now exit the room and go up to the point where you were asked to fetch a glass of water. Use fingerprint in fingerprint ID. The door will open when you walk in front of it.

Now go right through the door. On the next screen use the authorised mission on the mailbox. The electric barrier will now go. Go through the door. Go through the door. Go to the trashcan. Use the electric cable on the electric socket. Operate the razor.

Use the razor on the trashcan. At this point examine the cigarettes and make sure you know which one is the red one. Go through the door.

Prepare yourselves for the final installment next time.

Xenomorph

Level 12

This is the last ducts section that you'll come across. That is why the aliens are so sad, uhh. Get the rocket launcher. Don't use it yet, as you need all its firepower on the next level's super alien. Go to L and go up.

Level 11

The aliens here are amusing. On your scanner you see lots of them. On screen, nothing is visible. Wait in a trap and kill them when they come. Find the tank (14). Use all RL bullets and then your lasers, and then pick up the disks which the space tank guarded.

You're now on your way home.

Level 12

Go up with Q

Level10

Go up using O

Level 9

Recharge you weapons. Get your cards. Find the antimatter unit. Take the antimatter. Go up using N.

Level 8

Go up using M. Don't forget your chips.

Level 7

Go up with L.

Level 5

Get a piece of antimatter and go up using I.

Level 3

Get a piece of antimatter and go up using G.

Level 2

If there is an alien left, try your large lasers with setting three...

Level 1

You're back. Get rid on the antimatter. Put all the chips on their respective cards. Insert the OS and Nav disks at the right places. Insert the OS and Nav disks in your computer. Press the button and wait for the end sequence.

Congratulations!

Thanks to Hans Guyt from Holland for these tips.

TNT Console Corner

Over the last month we've been inundated with tips and cheats for console systems and so, we proudly tug back the velveteen curtains, tap our gavel, ring our bell and comb our hair in order to declare Console Corner well and truly, "open"!

NINTENDO GAMEBOY

Castlevania Adventure

Level 1:

Collect a powered-up whip. Now shoot the torch with the fireball and the one-up will fall to the ground.

Level 2:

Run and jump across all three moving platforms, while resisting the temptation of using your whip while you're in the air.

Level 3:

Wait for the ceiling to fall then hit the tower four times, make sure the last hit is very late.

Quickly run back to the torch, jump and whip it to collect the one-up.

Thanks to Mizanur Rahman of North Humberside for these tips.

SEGA MEGADRIVE

Space Harrier 2

On the title screen, press AB & C to access the music selection. The pieces of music correspond to the levels.

Golden Axe

On the character select screen, hold down button B and pull down and left together to reveal round select.

Thunderforce

For option mode, press A and START together on the title screen.

Super Shinobi

On the waterfall stage, where the logs fall horizontally, move to the end of the ledge, jump and somersault and fire so the knives go downards. If you hear a "crack" sound, jump on a log and jump back onto the ledge.

Batman

When you reach the first extra life symbol, jump across and get it. Go up to the top half of the moving platforms and fo back down. Another life has appeared. This can be repeated up to nine times and it's worth noting that this can be done in other parts of the game with batterangs etc.

Phelios

If completing the game in advance mode, don't turn the machine off. Restart the game and you can now play in expert mode.

Thanks to James Dobson for these.

MAGIC
STAGE 3

Poseidon Planet Eleven

For you C64 owners currently floundering in Poseidon, Ian Thomson from Scotland offer this rather excellent map.

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

Thunderblade II

When you get the game over message, press button 2, down & right at the same time to get two continue options.

Space Harrier

To enter the sount test, press right, left, down, right. When the game over message appears on the screen, press up, up, down, down left, right, left, right, down up down up. Don't tough either button 1 or 2 as on the last up you will start where you died with eight continue options.

Wonderboy II

To get out of the labyrinth use these directions at the intersections: D D R L D R D R U U U L U L D R D D R D D D L.

Galaxy Force

Do the planets in this order: Green, White, Blue and Red

Captain Silver

To continue when the words Game Over are on the screen press Up, Left and then both buttons.

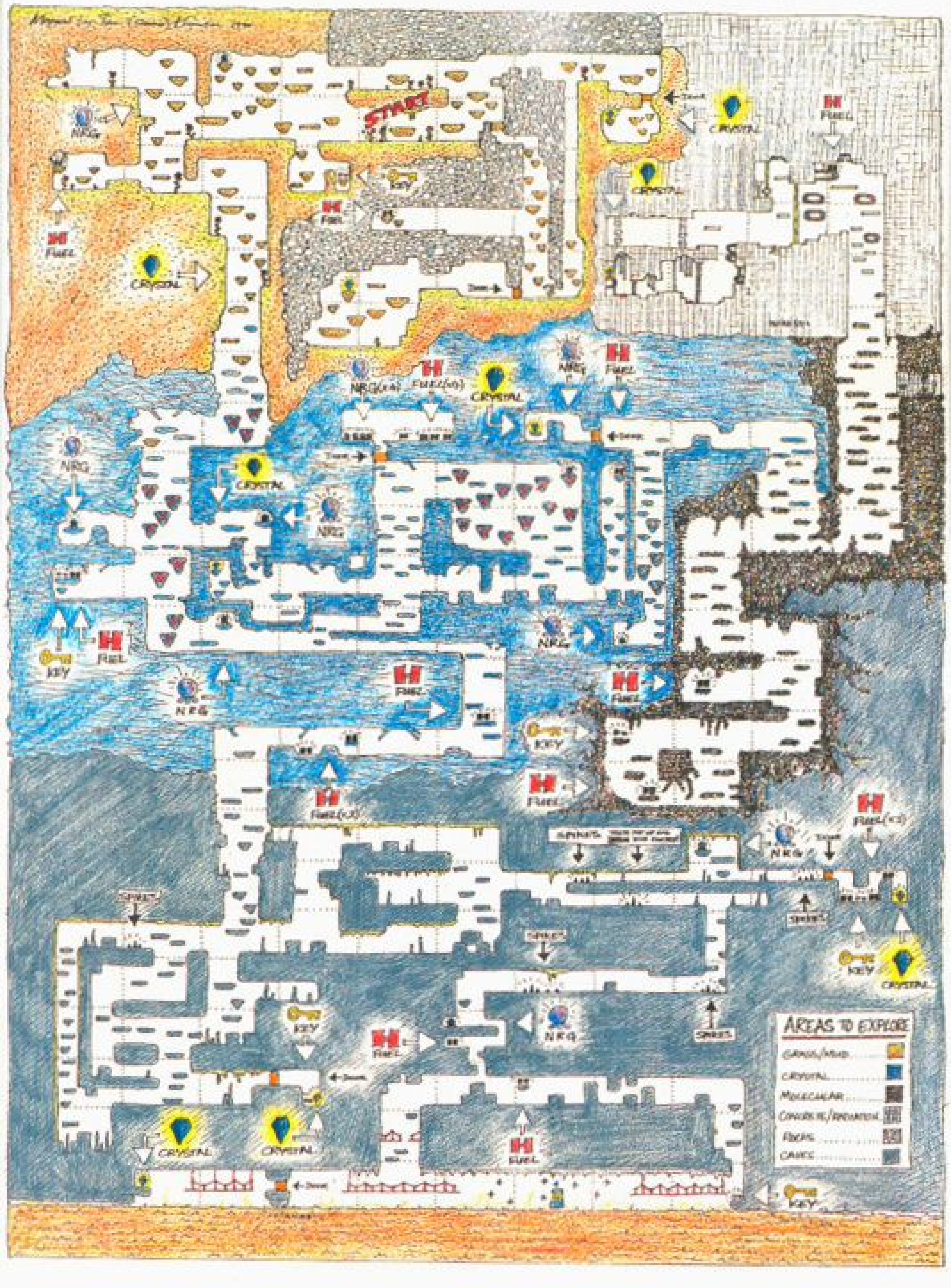
Choplifter

When you die, press the buttons very fast and you should have collected all the hostages.

Afterburner

Turn on and press pause exactly 100 times. The demo won't start and when you die you can continue up to stage seventeen.

Thanks to Jody Goodall for these tips.



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Rats!

Deep below the Hall Of Fame lies the mausoleum devoted to horror software. John Minson descends for a hair-raising encounter with The Rats!

Suspense. Not knowing what will happen next. Or even when it will happen. Fear of making your next decision. Terror that it will be your last if you get it wrong.

Unfortunately engendering these emotions has evaded all but the most original software authors. Too often the computer gamer player is presented with the whole picture. There are no dark corners in which monsters may dwell.

The Rats was a notable exception. A lone venture into computing by book publisher Hodder and Stoughton, this 1985 release combined strategy and adventure to capture the mood of James Herbert's gory horror classic.

RAT UP A DRAINPIPE

The cinematic, animated title sequence established the sense of foreboding. A scuttling rat's eyes were caught in the beam of a torch, setting the scene for the horrors to come.

Horrors indeed, but not quite immediately, for *The Rats* is a semi-role playing game, and the first persona you adopt is Foskins, Under-Secretary of State and the lucky man given the job of allocating resources to deal with the growing rodent menace. This is done on a map of London, which also serves to indicate whenever reports of rats arise.

True to Herbert's novel, the government is slow to provide emergency forces, so at first your strategies are severely limited. Rat-Kill is a specialist pest extermination organisation and you can also draw on the fire brigade and police. Eventually, as attacks increase, the army becomes available.

Each service has a variety of weapons to choose from. Anybody can be given a protective suit while the police can be allocated dogs, riot shields and rifles. Rat-Kill personnel can use chemical gas while the firemen have high-pressure water hoses and axes and the army has guns and flame throwers.

You also need to take research and development into account. This allows you to investigate where the rats are coming from; how to defend humans against the menace; how to kill the rats; and the biology of the menace. As more information becomes available the boffins might devise sonic locators, sonic scramblers, electric stun prods or anti-Rattus gas. It's left to you to discover how effective these weapons are.

You aren't given long to explore your options before an alarm sounds and you're into your first rat attack. These encounters are presented as mini adventures, loaded randomly from a selection of scenarios. Each starts with you being told your surroundings and which of Herbert's characters you are.

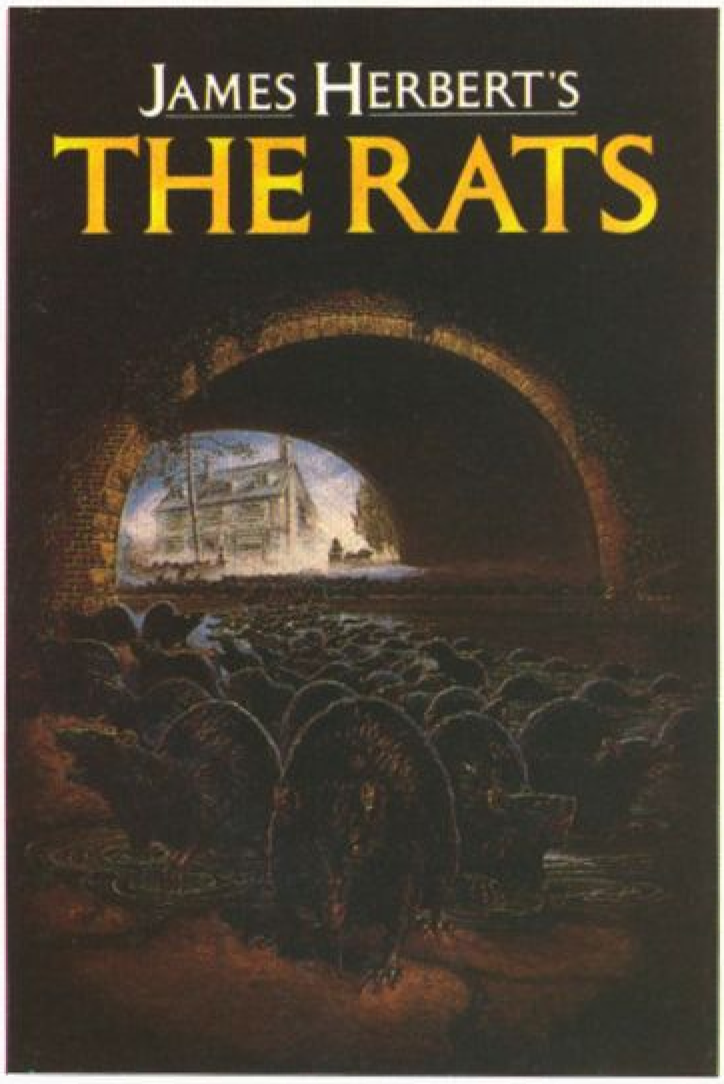
One of the neatest things about the game design is that it's entirely controlled by joystick or cursor keys. Commands use menus containing all the verbs and nouns which are relevant to the situation. Not only are you spared the hassle of searching for the right word, you might also find the Run Away option you want is suddenly unavailable.

Running away is indeed often the surest, if not the only way, to survive. However if you constantly avoided encounters, there will be no new information for Foskins to use as the basis for his campaign. Which means moving into ever more dangerous areas as the real-time information appears on screen. You can afford to lose certain characters to a grisly death but the lives of hero Harris, scientist Howard and Foskins have to be preserved at all costs.

As the game switches between strategic rounds and ever more dangerous adventure encounters, you gather information which allows the R&D boys to discover the rats' lair and to develop the necessary weapons to destroy them. You also have to keep track of where sightings are occuring in order to discover the secret runs used by the rodents.

The use of real-time action keeps you on your toes. If you don't act fast as Foskins you won't be prepared for the individual encounters. And these dramatic interludes carefully adopt Herbert's techniques to develop a high level of horror. No punches are pulled when it came to describing the attack on Paula Blakely's baby, for example.

Hodder wasn't the only book publisher at this time to dabble in software but it never became a force to challenge the Oceans and US Golds. Perhaps because it wasn't part of the software establishment it didn't bring preconceptions about existing genres and what a game should be to the design stage. The result was a novel program with an elegant control system which generated a nail-biting atmosphere.



HALL OF FAME

How does a game qualify for the Hall of Fame? It may have been a best seller in its day or overlooked and underrated. But one thing's for certain, it led the field, either creatively or technically. Clones don't qualify, however competent. And it's got lasting appeal. It's the program you still want to play after years - not weeks. So if you've got any suggestions, drop us a line.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR,
BARGAIN HUNTERS!

90 ACE Charts
See if your stalking horse has become a cash cow. Lots of bullish action in the markets this month. For your definitive news of the movements and reviews, just turn the page

95 Hardware Buyer's Guide
New Year - new machine? If your heart is set on buying a new set of chips to help '91 go with a bang, we've got the specs, the breakdowns, the details and the gen on every 16-bit machine on the market. Wise buyers should read thoroughly.

99 Direct Line
...to YOUR micro. If you own one of the ten major micros or consoles, there's a section for your computer here as ACE correspondents talk man to machine...

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The finest releases of the last three months, and a couple of slightly older classics served up in a delicate creamy dressing.

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Our monthly guide to what's on where and what's out when

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Winter wardrobe need some additions? Buy yourself a game at certain retailers and you could get yourself a T-Shirt, a Hat or Badge.

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Pat Winstanley with her regular section for dedicated adventurers.

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The infamous ACE Crossward returns!– crack it and win a prize.

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Software for virtually nothing. Available for people who aren't afraid to share. What a caring society we live in.

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Small ads, big sales. Your chance to buy, sell and tell the world.

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Read the book... load the game...
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100
GO TO SPAIN!

ACE has brought you over 40 issues, all packed with info on games technology. If you're missing any back issues – such as this one, covering the Philips CD-I machine – then check out page 130

ACE CHARTS

The ACE Charts give you the definitive list of top scoring games EVERY MONTH – as reviewed by ALL British games magazines.

DID YOU WIN LAST MONTH?

Yet again, readers were extraordinarily consistent in spotting certain games, and completely adrift on others. For example, NO-ONE spotted *Plotting* on the C64, or *Spindizzy Worlds*, and hardly anyone got *Midwinter* for the PC (but well done to winner **Stephen Sweet** of Belgium). However, lots of people spotted *Powermonger* for the Amiga (a prize to **Ambereen Akram** of Halesowen) and **Ivan Ironman Stewart** on the Spectrum (congratulations **Robert Vass** of Chingford). Finally, on the CPC, dozens of entrants spotted **Iron Lord** – including a surprising number of owners of other formats (and also including winner **Tom Kirby** of Muswell Hill).

Next month we're making big improvements to the Stock Market page – don't miss them! They'll include a regular showing for the Gallup sales-based charts, so by comparing them with our own charts we can tell if review ratings (which determine the ACE Chart positions) really make any difference!

What you can win...

You'll get a mystery game worth up to £25 for your machine if you can pick out NEXT MONTH's top chart entries. Get all five right in any category and you'll get £150 worth of software! Entry instructions are opposite.

THE STOCKMARKET

In addition to our games charts, we also have a bit of fun with the figures each month when we produce the ACE Stockmarket. It's a list of the top 25 softcos as determined by the ratings their games are currently receiving. You can see their fortunes rising and falling in each issue...

Having collated all the games reviewed in the latest issues of computer magazines, we calculate the average mark that each publisher received for every one of its games on each format. This is the rating that you see in the second column. So, for example, if the company is great at sourcing 16-bit games but botches up its 8-bit conversions, that will pull down the average mark, even if you can see one of its titles heading up the Amiga, ST or PC chart printed over the page. If all the games are excellent, or if the company has just one brilliant program doing the rounds at the moment, it will consequently have a high rating.

The last column shows how well a company's games have fared compared to the Software Index. This single figure represents the average review mark (expressed as a percentage) that all games, all formats, received during the last month. It's a quick guide to how good the current crop of titles is, and each company's Index score shows how well their games compare to the norm. For example, in this month's chart, Empire's current titles are worth 8.16 percentage points above average - according to the industry's reviewers.

We print only the top 25 companies each month. In fact, we keep tabs on all of them, but you don't want to read through a list of over 100 names in every issue. Occasionally, a new company will enter the listings, in which case its name is marked with an asterisk.

Finally, we take care that the information here is genuinely useful. To that end, we don't count companies which have only received a single solitary review.

Software index: 75.42
Holding steady at around 75.5 over the Christmas period.

PUBLISHER	SCORE	+/-	INDEX
Cinemaware	90	n/a	14.58
Micro Style	86.48	+1.33	11.06
Palace	85.5	+3.96	10.08
Gremlin	85.27	+1.6	9.85
Empire	83.58	+4.72	8.16
Electronic Arts	83.53	+4.92	8.11
Digital Magic	83.5	-3.25	8.08
Action 16	82	+9	6.58
SSI/US Gold	82.81	+8.51	7.39
Virgin	82.28	+4.15	6.86
Activision	81.98	-1.74	6.56
Anco	81.85	n/a	6.43
Microprose	81.81	-1.88	6.39
Rainbow Arts	81.53	+6.63	6.11
Audiogenic	80.33	-0.72	4.91
System 3	79	n/a	3.58
Mirrorsoft	79	-3	3.58
Hewson	79	+1.83	3.58
Core Design	77.58	+8.08	2.16
Krisalis	77.1	+5.1	1.68
Millennium	76.61	-3.69	1.19
Code Masters	76.6	+8.29	1.18
US Gold	76.43	-4.03	1.01
Ocean	76.38	-5.86	0.96
Psygnosis	76.18	-1.87	0.76

AMIGA

Powermonger	Electronic Arts	95.33
Killing Game Show	Psygnosis	89
Lotus Turbo Esprit	Gremlin	88.09
Robocop 2	Ocean	87.88
Cadaver	Image Works	87.38

Powermonger retains its number one slot from last month – and even increases its lead over the runners-up.

C64

Golden Axe	Virgin	92
Buck Rogers – Doomsday	SSI/US Gold	91.25
Rick Dangerous 2	Micro Style	89.08
Midnight Resistance	Ocean	88.75
Puzznic	Ocean	87.5

Good strong C64 chart with brand new, original games, shaking off the budget image that it's had for most of the year. Here at ACE we reckon *Rick Dangerous 2* deserves the number 1 slot, though.

AMSTRAD CPC

Wheels of Fire	Domark	86
Shadow of the Beast	Gremlin	83
Sim City	Infogrames	82
Time Machine	Activision	81
Tiger Road	Kixx	79

Compilations are always good value, and Domark's TNT moves to number one. Nice to see that *Sim City*, highly acclaimed on 16-bit machines, has converted well to the CPC.

IBM PC

Wing Commander	Origin	93.95
Midwinter	Rainbird	93.5
Secret of Monkey Island	US Gold	92.84
Sim Earth	Maxis/Ocean	90.25
Buck Rogers - Doomsday	SSI/US Gold	86

Midwinter's STILL here and this is *Monkey Island*'s second month in the top five. Early days yet for Maxis's astonishing *Sim Earth*?

WHAT THE FIGURES ABOVE MEAN...

First, of course, you've got the game. Then the software house and – in the last column – the average score (converted to a percentage with typical ACE precision to two decimal places) the game received in ALL reviews during the last month. Don't forget that the review ratings are taken from all UK magazines, not just ACE, so we don't necessarily agree with some of the judgements here, but all review ratings are, to a certain extent, subjective.

SPECTRUM AND ST CHARTS OPPOSITE

HOW TO ENTER

STEP ONE

Find a **postcard** – or write your entry on the **back of an envelope.** Enter your name and address, a daytime telephone number if you have one, and the Round Number.

STEP TWO

Tell us your age and which machine you own. Just in case you win!

STEP THREE

Examine this month's charts. Then, using your knowledge of the games scene, try to predict which games will come top of the six machine specific charts. Finally, enter on your postcard:

- the top game for the Spectrum
- the top game for the C64
- the top game for the CPC's
- the top game for the IBM PC
- the top game for the Amiga
- the top game for the ST

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ENTER A SUGGESTION FOR EVERY MACHINE! But remember that your chances of winning may increase if you do.

STEP FOUR (OPTIONAL)

You can also try to predict which company will be at the top of next month's Stockmarket listing (see this page). Enter on the card: '**The top softco will be...**(name of company)'

STEP FIVE (OPTIONAL)

If you want to go for the jackpot £150 prize, then select any of the previous categories and try to predict the top FIVE entries for next month instead of just the top one. Then tell us which category you're predicting for – it can be either the Stockmarket or any of the machine categories in Step Three. REMEMBER – YOU CAN ONLY SUBMIT **ONE** JACKPOT CATEGORY!

STEP SIX

Post the card (WITH a stamp!) to us to arrive not later than the closing date for this round (31st January). The address is:

ACE Stockmarket
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London
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The first correct forecast for each category taken out of the hat wins the prize. If you get more than one entry correct, you'll be entered in further draws for each category, thus increasing your chances of winning a prize.

THIS IS ROUND 15

Each month's competition has a round number so that we can correctly identify entries. You MUST include the round number on your postcard otherwise your entry may not be processed correctly.

THE RULES

- All entries must be received by January 31st 1991.
- No employees of EMAP, or of any company involved in the production, distribution, or sale of ACE Magazine are eligible for entry.
- Only one entry per household. Proof of posting not held as proof of delivery.
- We cannot undertake to deliver specific software titles as prizes, but rest assured that we will make every effort to ensure that the games get the adrenalin pumping!

ATARI ST

Speedball 2	**Image Works**	**92.49**
Nine Lives	**ARC**	**86.38**
M1 Tank Platoon	**Microprose**	**86.17**
Immortal	**Electronic Arts**	**85**
Team Yankee	**Empire**	**84.73**

***Immortal* hangs on in there as *Speedball 2* zips in with a bullet to number one. *M1 Tank Platoon* has been a long time coming, but was obviously worth the wait...**

SPECTRUM

R-Type	**Hit Squad**	**93**
Teen' Mutant Hero Turtles	**Image Works**	**92**
NARC	**Ocean**	**91**
Rick Dangerous 2	**Micro Style**	**88**
Pang	**Ocean**	**88**

It seems slightly ironic that a two year old budget program has beaten *Turtles* to the number one slot. *RD2* deserves its placing however, and *Pang's* a neat little cutie.

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HARD SELL

The upgrade path is long and filled with potential pitfalls. Here, as part of our reader service, is the fully updated ACE guide to the machines you're most likely to want which will help you find the one best suited to your needs.

Due to space restrictions the guide is run in two halves; 16-bit machines this month and consoles next. When space permits, we'll print both. Good hunting!

ACORN ARCHIMEDES

Models: Archimedes 310, 3000, 410 420, 440
Package: keyboard, mouse and drive: keyboard mouse and drive plus monitor (colour or mono);
Memory: 3000 512K; 310 1Mb; 410 1Mb; 420 2Mb; 440 4Mb
Processor: Acorn ARM
RRP: Prices range from £789.97 for A3000 alone to £2644.60 for A440 with colour monitor
Contact: Acorn 0223 245200

IN BRIEF

Still the cutting edge of micro technology. Acorn's ARM is about the fastest thing this side of a Cray. This very exciting machine – although gathering admirers since the introduction of the A3000 – still lacks a good games software base and is best left to the enthusiast.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 320 x 256 or 640 x 256 with normal monitors. 640 x 512 available with multi-sync monitors.
Palette: 4096
Colours: From mono up to 256 (320 x 256) or 16 (640 x 512).
TV: No
Monitor Output: Mono composite video: colour – RGB + sync.
Monitor Supplied: Depends on package bought.
Monitor Options: Acorn dedicated 14 inch medium res. colour; 12 inch high res mono; Multi-sync colour.
Sprites: 1
Speed: Blistering.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good
MIDI: With extra hardware.
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 16 channels (8 stereo pairs); 6 octaves, 1 internal speaker.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 800K
Disk Price: From £1.20 upwards.
Disk Performance: Good and fast.
Keyboard: 103 keys with programmable auto-repeat. Early keyboards have a cheap feel given the quality of the machine.
Joystick/Mouse: 3 button mouse; n support for joysticks.
Interfaces: 25 pin D parallel; 9 piN mouse; 3.5mm stereo headphone jack; 64 way din; 41612 expansion port; IEC 320 video outlet; I/O interface.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Still very limited. Some games available most software is for productivity and business.
Current Releases: See above.
Games: Most famous are *Zarch (Virus)* and *Conqueror*. But there have been several impressive one-off titles released recently.
Graphics: Potential is enormous. Some excellent packages available
Music: Like graphics, but developers remain shy.
Prospects: Limited. Even the cheaper models find it tough competing with STs and Amigas.
Software Loading: Very reliable.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Still scarce, some 305 and 310s starting to appear but expect to pay for them.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to faulty machines dealer.

APPLE MACINTOSH

Models: Classic, SE/30, LC, IIsi
Package: Monitor with built-in CPU and disk drive, separate keyboard
Memory: 1Mb (Classic 1), 2Mb (Classic 2, SE/30, LC &IIsi), 5Mb (IIsi)
Processor: Motorola 68000 (SE/30); 68020 (LC), 68030 (SE/30, IIsi)
Recommended Retail Price: Classic 1 £575; Classic 2 £895; SE/30 £2395+ (inc 40Mb hard disc); LC £1235 (inc 40Mb hard disc); IIsi £2295 (2Mb+40Mb hard disc), £2645 (5Mb+ 40Mb hard disc), £2995 (5Mb+80Mb) (all ex VAT)
Contact: Apple 081-569-1199

IN BRIEF

A very expensive up-market machine for those keen on desktop publishing, WIMP systems and up-market software. Release of the Classic range an exciting move for wannabe Mac owners. Software is very expensive. Quite a few games in the US, but few over here. Good for MIDI musicians but be prepared to pay through the nose for software.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Classic & SE 512 x 342; LC 640 x 480; IIsi 640 x 480 (colour) & 640 x 870 (grey).
Palette: Classic & SE are black and white; LC 256; IIsi 256 or 16 greys in max. res.
Colours: 256 with colour monitor.
TV: No
Monitor Output: Integral monitor.
Monitor Supplied: Yes.
Monitor Options: Hi-res mono & colour available for LC & IIsi.
Sprites: None
Speed: Classic 1okay; Classic 2, SE/30 &LC reasonably fast; IIsi very fast.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good
MIDI: Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: IIsi yes, rest no.
Performance: 4 channels give good performance.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 1.44Mb.
Disk Price: £1.50 – £2.00
Disk Performance: Generally fast
Keyboard: Separate with 81 keys including function keys and numeric key pad. Optional extra is the Apple Extended keyboard with 105 keys.
Joystick/Mouse: Joystick is not supported; high-quality single button mouse is supplied with machine.
Interfaces: SE30 – Apple Desktop Bus connector. 2 RS232/RS422 serial; external disk drive; 96 pin Euro-Din expansion slot; SCSI – DB-25 connector; external audio amplifier. IIsi – 2 RS232/RS422 serial; DB-25 SCSI T.

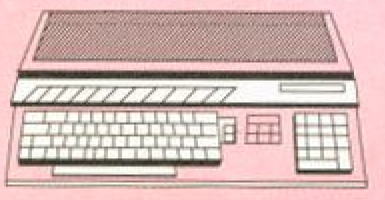
SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: A very wide base exists in all fields except games.
Current Releases: Adequate, though largely of US origin and in the business or DTP field.
Games: Very few arcade titles but plenty of icon-driven adventures.
Graphics: Lots of excellent software for those interested in DIY publishing.
Music: Very well supported for MIDI software – but it's expensive to boot.
Prospects: As always, excellent – especially in business and DTP.
Software Loading: Quick and reliable.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Generally the RRP – Macs are only sold through dealerships. Ask for a discount for cash.
Second Hand Availability: Scarce and expensive. A better market exists in older models but these are best avoided.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Apple offers Applecare – "insurance" you take out to cover the cost of repairs after the guarantee has run out.

ATARI ST



Models: Atari 520STFM; 520STE; 1040STE; Mega STs; Stacy
Package: 520 and 1040 have keyboard with built-in disk drive; Mega versions have separate keyboard. Power Pack includes 520STE with light gun, joystick and £400 of "free" software. New "Discovery" pack includes similar value software to Power pack but with an STFM and an educational bent.
Memory: 520STFM and 520STE 512K; 1040STE 1Mb; Mega ST 1, 2 or 4Mb; Stacy 2 or 4Mb. STE machines expand internally to 4Mb.
Processor: Motorola 68000
Recommended Retail Price: 520STE (Power Pack) £399; 520STFM (Discovery Pack) £299; 1040STE £499; Stacy N/A
Contact: Atari 0753 33344

IN BRIEF

Excellent as a general purpose home machine for games, small business and productivity. It's the number one choice for MIDI musicians. The ST's price still gives it a slight edge over the graphically more advanced Amiga. The new baby ST – Stacy – is tipped by Atari to be the musician's portable since it is a complete 2Mb or 4Mb ST with hard disk and mono monitor in a small box.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Low-res 320 x 200; medium res 640 x 200; high-res 640 x 400
Palette: STFM 512; STE 4096; Stacy 2
Colours: Black and white in high-res; 4 colours in medium-res; 16 in low-res.
TV: Yes. Not Stacy.
Monitor Output: STFM models only, others through TV modulator
Monitor Supplied: No; Stacy has integral LCD monitor
Monitor Options: Atari monitors SM124 high-res mono; SC1442 med res colour.
Sprites: 1
Speed: Fast
***NB** High resolution display is only available on monochrome monitor; medium and low res displays only available on colour monitors or TVs. Blitter fitted to late STFMs (standard on STE) improves the GEM access.*

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: Yes
Stereo Output: STE only.
Performance: 3 channel sound is average to good depending on software. STE features 8 bit PCM sound but no current software uses it.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 720K
Disk Price: £1.20 to £1.50
Disk Performance: Reliable and fast. Early machines were supplied with a single-sided disk drive.
Keyboard: 96 keys including 10 functions keys. Has a cheap feel which can be improved with third party spring kits.
Joystick/Mouse: 2 Joystick ports are standard; 2 button mouse is supplied with machine. Stacy is supplied with a trackball.

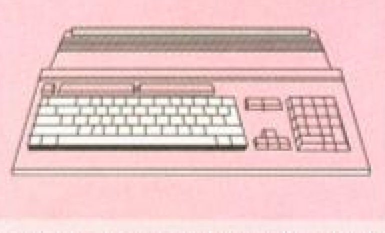
SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Excellent. A few budget titles are starting to appear now.
Current Releases: None of the major software houses ignore the ST so it is well served with plenty of good software.
Games: Across the board.
Graphics: Good with some excellent software to manipulate them.
Music: Excellent. Plenty of sound samplers, editors and MIDI software make this the musician's choice.
Prospects: Very good, but the Amiga is currently the favourite with software houses in the UK and the ST has failed to capture a market in the States.
Software Loading: A hangover from the original machines is the 360K disk format which means few companies bother to supply double-sided disks. This means large games require two or more disks with all the tedious disk swapping this entails.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP. Watch out for the twice yearly bundles.
Second Hand Availability: Very common and quite cheap. STs do not hold their value well – beware very old, single sided machines.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to dealer if faulty.

COMMODORE AMIGA



Models: Amiga A500; A2000, A3000
Package: A500 has keyboard and built-in drive with separate PSU; A2000 has separate keyboard with built-in (fan assisted) PSU. Recently released A3000 is a very powerful machine indeed.
Memory: A500 512K; A2000 1M; A3000
Processor: 500/2000 Motorola 68000 A3000 68030 16 or 25Mhz
Recommended Retail Price: A500 £NA; A2000 £1236.25; Batman Pack £399.99; Flight of Fantasy Pack £399.99; Class Of The 90's pack £579.99; A3000 from £2659
Contact: 0628 878888

IN BRIEF

A stunning specification with custom chips to rival almost everything around, the Amiga is the first choice for the most exigent of games players and video professionals. After an initially shaky start the machine continues to sell extremely well and has overtaken the ST in the UK, though the latter machine still has a slightly larger installed base. The A3000 is a top-end workstation substitute; includes Workbench 2, featuring enhanced icons, file handling, and security features plus *Amiga Vision*, a multi-media programming tool. A3000 also comes in three configurations, ranging from a 16Mhz, 40Mbyte hard disk at £2659 to a 25/100 at £3610.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: From 320 x 200 to 640 x 400 (more possible in software)
Palette: 4096
Colours: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 or 4096
TV: With modulator.
Monitor Output: SCART + composite video in monochrome.
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: C1084 £349.99
Sprites: 16 in hardware + unlimited BOBS from soft/hardware.
Speed: Very fast with good software.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: No. Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: 2 phono connectors.
Performance: Among the best around. Custom hardware squeezes 9 octaves of 8 bit digital sound into the four channels.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5inch – 837K A3000: 40/100Mbyte hard disk formatted.
Disk Price: £1.20 – £2.00
Disk Performance: Noisy and sluggish. Third party software is available to improve matters.
Keyboard: 94 keys. 10 function keys and separate cursor cluster.
Joystick/Mouse: 2 button mouse supplied as standard.
Interfaces: Two Joystick/mouse; stereo audio; external disk drive(s); RS232 serial; Centronics parallel printer; SCART RGB/video; composite monochrome video; expansion bus (internal on A2000; 32-bit on A3000); clock/memory expansion on A500 only; internal PC expansion on A2000 and A3000.

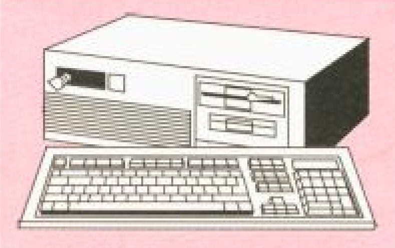
SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: As STs.
Current Releases: Everyone's doing them.
Games: Something for everyone.
Graphics: Quality and range is unsurpassed.
Music: Needs better support for MIDI. Internal sound software is well supported thanks to IFF standards.
Prospects: Excellent.
Software Loading: Noisy but usually reliable. Plagued by viruses.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Old Amiga 1000s can be picked up cheaply enough but these lacked the extra graphics modes of later models. Try to find a good value pack.
Second Hand Availability: Becoming common. Best buys are late Amiga 500s with Kickstart 1.2.
Maintenance: One years guarantee. Return faulty machines to dealers.

IBM PC



Model: IBM's PC was the first PC to be accepted in large quantities (not the first PC) and remains the standard by which all others are judged. There are hundreds of clones and variations including offerings from Amstrad, Atari and Commodore. In general, with PCs you pay for speed and better graphics standards. The extra money is worth it if you can afford it.
Package: Depends on the manufacturer although most are supplied with monitors. They can even be bought in kit form at no extra saving
Memory: Usually 512K or 640K. Can be anything from 64K to 1Mb+. Always go for a 640K model.
Processor: Intel 8088/8086 in base machine is sometimes replaces with the faster NEC V20/30. More expensive machines are based on Intel's much faster 286, 386SX, 386 and even the latest 486.
Recommended Retail Price: Can be picked up for as little as £299 for a "no frills" machine. With top-of-the-range 486 based clones – and the official IBM versions – the sky's the limit. Look for a good EGA or VGA model for between £750 and £1200.

IN BRIEF

Superb value if you want the ultimate all-rounder, the PC still betrays its business origins. Almost every major software house now port their titles to the PC but these remain limited by the constraints of the basic (most common) machines – which means they tend to be limited in sound and graphics. Definitely NOT first choice if entertainment is your preferred use for computers, or if you cannot afford the better EGA or VGA models (which are really essential for good games playing).

GRAPHICS

The first PCs weren't fitted with graphics as standard but most clones incorporate the necessary hardware and come with a monitor. There are four main standards: CGA – a nasty but all too common colour display; EGA about the lowest colour option worth considering; VGA - an Amiga/ST-beating display; and Hercules - monochrome only. EGA and VGA are usually only fitted as standard to more expensive machines (Amstrad's PC2086 is one exception).
Resolution: CGA 320 x 200; EGA 640 x 350; Hercules 720 x 384; VGA 800 x 600.
Palette: CGA 8 (in two fixed sets); EGA 64; VGA 256
Colours: CGA 4; EGA 16; VGA 64; Hercules 2.
Monitor Output: TTL RGB/RGBI (CGA); analogue RGB (E/VGA)
Monitor Options: Vast. Many monitors are dedicated to just one or two modes – some have amber, green or white monochrome displays – check before buying.
Sprites: None
Speed: From very slow – 8088 to very fast – 80486

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Built-in sound is poor. Third-party add-on boards such as Roland (£380) and Ad-Lib (£150) - which is fast-becoming a standard - provide synthesiser-quality sound through an amplifier.
MIDI: Third part interfaces available.
Stereo Output: With boards, yes.
Performance: Not the ideal basic machine for the musically bent – an Atari ST offers more for MIDI, the Amiga more for software sound

purists.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 5.25in –180/360K/ 1.2Mb; 3.5in 720K/1.44Mb

Disk Price: 60p – £3.00

Disk Performance: Average. Most PC owners also buy hard disks. A large amount of PC applications software refuses to work unless you have a hard disk.

Keyboard: Almost as many variations as there are clones. Prefer the AT or extended AT layouts to the XT layout since it easier to use.

Joystick/Mouse: Neither supplied as standard. The better clones include a mouse or at least a mouse port, especially since IBM's WIMP system (Windows) has become more popular.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Vast!

Current Releases: All major software houses now produce for the PC, with many now supporting the superior E/ VGA modes.

Games: Most of the Amiga/ST titles appear on PC sooner or later.

Graphics: Given the right graphics adaptor, the PC has nice graphics and the software is usually excellent. On a CGA PC the graphics stink no matter how good the software is.

Music: Unexpanded it's pathetic. However, add-on boards offer some of the best sound you'll hear on home computers..

Prospects: The PC is the eternal champion – as others fall by the wayside it carries on getting faster and better all the time. This is aided by Intel constantly improving the machine's processor and the vast user base demanding better equipment.

Software Loading: Fast and reliable; very fast from hard disk.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Watch out for package deals form large chains and mail order companies. If you don't know too much about PCs go for a name you know.

Second Hand Availability: Common but be careful you do not get a clapped out monitor/keyboard.

Maintenance: Usually a year's guarantee – but competition has forced the price of maintenance contracts down to affordable levels. This often means that they fix machines in-situ for free.

HARDWARE UPGRADE

The big fear of most when upgrading is that your new machine will become obsolete within a few months of purchase or, even worse, the company manufacturing the machine will go out of business. No such fears with the machines on offer here. Current 16-bit technology is unlikely to change for at least five years. That's because although the leap from 8-bit to 16-bit architecture represents a quantum leap in power, the upgrade from 16-bit to 32-bit is nowhere near as dramatic in processing terms. 32-bit technology, however, would generate significantly higher construction costs, but without a really worthwhile increase in functionality.

And there are no chances of Apple, IBM, Commodore, Atari or Acorn going under in the forseeable future.

For that reason, the ST, the Amiga, and the PC are probably here to stay for some considerable time, so you can choose between them (or the Archie and Apple) without worry.

Of course, there is one other consideration: consoles. Our view at ACE (and we've said it before and we'll say it again) is very definitely this: consoles undoubtedly offer greater arcade gaming possibilities and the forthcoming CD-ROM units and smart cards should help iron out some of the data storage problems that make these machines unsuitable for data-hungry scenarios. However, the added functionality of a computer with keyboard and expansion options remains, in our opinion, essential to true state of the art gaming.

The inevitable conclusion is this: that you need a console AND a 16-bit computer! And when it comes to consoles, we only really have two strong recommendations at present, the Nintendo Gameboy and the Sega Megadrive (see our article recommending this unit and comparing the opposition in issue 36 of ACE).

To help you with the console choice, however, next month sees the ACE Hard Sell Console Section, with all the facts and figures you need about the various contenders. Be there!

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Tunnels & Trolls (RPG Classic)	(New World)	**IBM**	£29.99
Overrun (Modern Tactical)	(SSI)	**Amiga 1Mb**	£29.99
Command H.Q. (Grand Strategy)	(Microprose)	**IBM**	£39.99
Railroad Tycoon (see Strat + Review)	(Microprose)	**IBM**	£34.99
Silent Service II (Sub Simulation)	(Microprose)	**IBM**	£34.99
M1 Tank Platoon (Modern Tank)	(Microprose)	**IBM, Amiga 1Mb**	£34.99
A-10 Tank Killer (Jet Simulator)	(Dynamix)	**IBM, Amiga 1Mb**	£34.99
Dark Heart of Uukraal (RPG)	(Broderbund)	**IBM**	£29.99
Operation Spruance (Modern Naval)	(Parsec)	**Amiga 1Mb**	£29.99
Harpoon (Modern Naval)	(360)	**IBM, Amiga 1Mb**	£39.99
Harpoon Battle Set #2(North Atlantic Convoy)	(360)	**IBM**	£24.99
Harpoon Editor (editor for Harpoon)	(360)	**IBM**	£29.99

This is a small selection of titles now available a more detailed description of these and many more can be found in our catalogue

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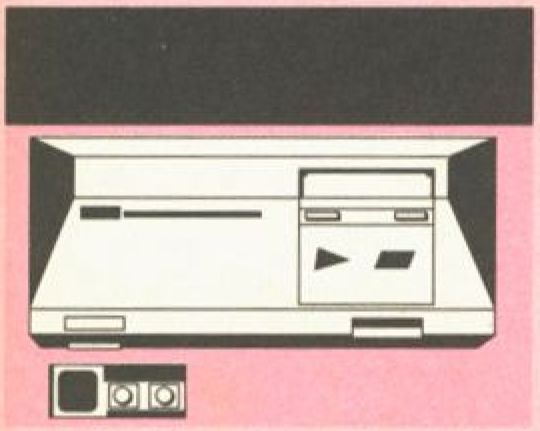
DIRECT LINE

To YOUR micro...

Monthly machine specific columns for the users of the ten most popular machines, written from a personal viewpoint by other users...



Three new official launches from SEGA landed on our desks this month. And what a wide spectrum of gaming styles they encompass. There's Aerial Assault, an out-and-out shoot'em-up. There's World Cup Italia 90 for sports fans and there's even Ultima IV offering a rare role-playing treat for Master system owners.

WORLD CUP ITALIA 90

When World Cup Italia 90 was converted onto home machines, after being reasonably well received in the arcades, the immediate obstacle it had to overcome was the competition from the towering great of sports games, Kick Off.

Unfortunately, the comparisons weren't especially kind, with World Cup falling down in all the areas where Kick Off did so well.

Now the game is on the Master, it seems to be much more at home. It was never intended to be a realistic interpretation of soccer, more a knockabout flavour of the game. Indeed, there aren't even enough players on each team. The degree of finesse which you have over the ball is at best limited and at worst laughable.

However, the speed of the game; the swift switch-over from player to player and the 3D penalty shoot out offer easy-to-pick-up fun superior to Kick Off. The penalty section itself is excellent, with you and an opponent (computerised or human) pitted against each other in a high-speed battle of reactions.

AERIAL ASSAULT

Fans of UN Squadron will find no surprises here, just an entertaining horizontal scrolling blast. Your (easy, medium or hard) mission is detailed on your HUD computer, and it's off into the wide blue yonder to do some killing. Spinning enemy jets drop power-ups (speed, muti-directional fire, bombs etc) and you must face a wide variety of enemy attacks before reaching your target. While the presention may seem a little hackneyed, the gameplay is sound.

ULTIMA IV

Lord British, the wise and compassionte ruler of Britannia wishes to erase the legacy left behind by three evil lord. And he's out to recruit you to do the job.

Those unfamiliar with the Ultima games should play this one in the shops before buying, as it may not be to your taste. Even addicts of the genre will find the re-designed text narrative difficult to read.

●Jim Douglas

MEGADRIVE

We've got a super competition for all you Megadrive owners this month, but more of that in a moment...

EXCLUSIVE CITY!

Next month's ACE will be of particular interest for Megadrive owners! We've got an exclusive interview with some Stateside programmers who have been working away on some super-sexy cartridge entertainment in secret until NOW!

In a scorchinng exclusive, we get the guys to dish the dirt on their newest games. We can't name them yet, but just wait until next month - you'll be amazed!

ELECTRONIC ARTS

EA have wowed 16-bit machine owners with games like Populous and Indy 500. And now their getting ready to turn their hand to the Megadrive. They say they want to maximise their coding potential and marry it with the superb cababilities of the Megadrive. The next issue of Ace will be carrying a sneak preview of their new releases, along with a depthy comparison between the style of EAs stat-packed simulation software and how it will convert onto a console system.

MEGADRIVE COMPETITION

Everyone knows that there's nothing finer to start the New Year like a whopper bundle of free software. And so, you'll be pleased to hear that simply by excercising a couple of dormant brain cells you can scoop a fantabulous bag of Megadrive loot. We're giving away £100 worth of software to the first person out of the hat who has answered all of the questions correctly and has written the best phrase at the end.

So. It couldn't be more simple; just read the questions below, fill in your answers on the coupon and send it (on the back of an envelope) to: ACELINES MEGADRIVE COMPO, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

The competition closes on February 8th.

THE QUESTIONS

1) What was the Megadrive called in the USA
a) Genesis
b) U2
c) 10cc

2) How many bits has the central processor?
a) 16
b) 18
c) 2.0GTI

3) What colour are the Grey Import Megadrives, available through mail order?
a) Grey
b) Black
c) Silver

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●Jim Douglas

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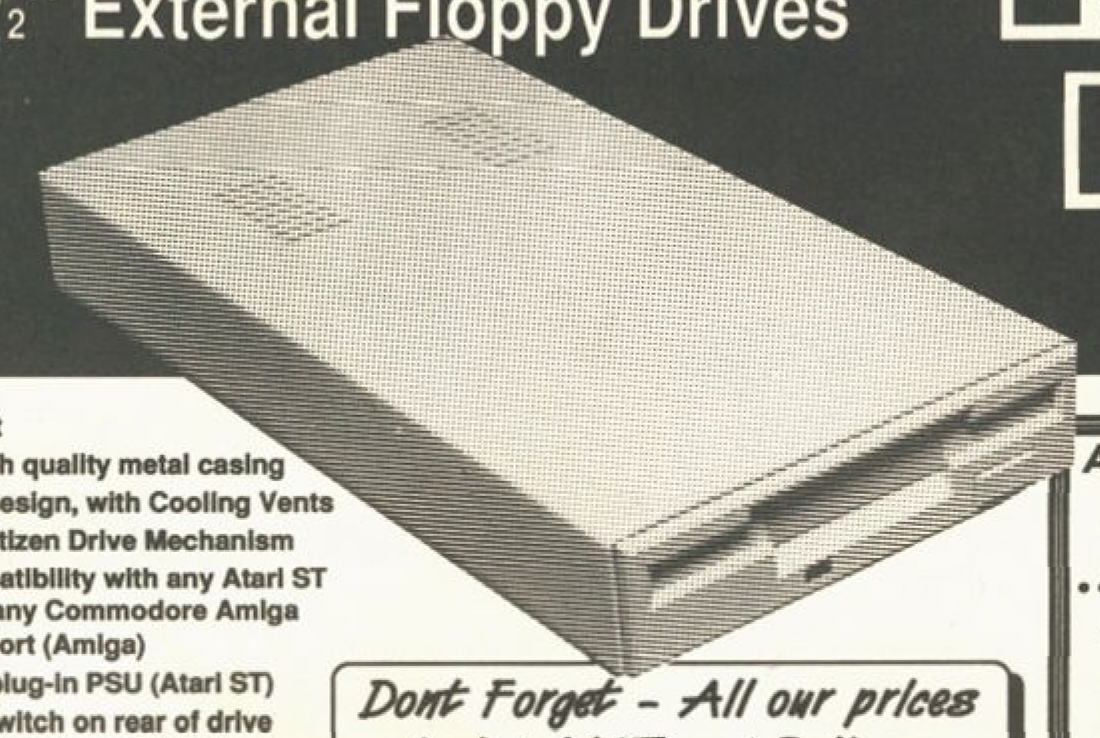

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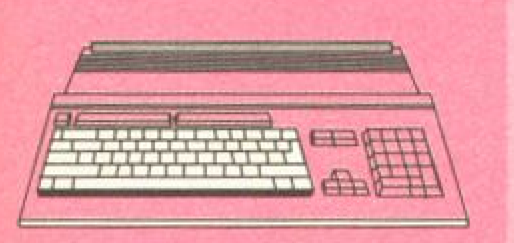


Xmas is over for another year. Did you get the games you wanted? I finally got a finished version of Electronic Art's *Powermonger* - and it's brilliant! Congratulations to programmers Bullfrog.

***TOTAL* TIE-IN**

Well, I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. Ocean have finally released *Total Recall* for review, and it should have hit the shelves by the time you read this, just in time for the video showing. Because of ACE's tight pre-Xmas deadline it just missed getting into this issue - we had hoped to do a big *Robocop-Recall* special - but it will definitely be getting the full ACE treatment next time.

However, I can give you my early opinions on it, though I should point out that I've only played through the first two levels so this should not be thought of as being a definitive review!

My first impressions were mixed. The music by David Whittaker - computer music maestro who recently wrote the tunes for *Shadow of the Beast 2* - is excellent and suits the nature of the game and film perfectly. Unfortunately the pre-game intro sequence is very disappointing due to the fact that Ocean are not allowed to copy Arnie's likeness, unless it comes directly from the film (i.e. the poster or stills) Therefore the bloke in the intro and the game doesn't look anything like the man himself. A pity.

The first level takes place just after Quaid's disastrous visit to Rekall. The baddy Cohaagen's men chase Quaid as he searches for pieces of helpful equipment on a multi-directional scrolling network of platforms and lifts. Luckily there's a gun to help Quaid defend himself. This level's incredibly tough, due to the hordes of baddies and the slow firing rate of the gun.

Survive this and you can try to escape in Johnny Cab. You look down on a road, and control the cab on a road scrolling from left to right, jam packed with other cabs and nasty black cars that fire at you. I wasn't immediately taken with this level - it looks very primitive and is highly reminiscent of the Batcar levels in the 8-bit version of Ocean's *Batman*. However it does grow on you and it's quite addictive.

Overall I'm a little disappointed by *Recall*. For a start, Ocean seem to have jumbled up the plot - in the first level you're looking for the suitcase, which surely Quaid didn't find until *after* the Cab chase? The game itself seems very derivative of other Ocean tie-ins and it's very tough in places. That said, there's a fairly strong urge to come back and play again. Give it a good try in the shop before you buy or wait for the full review next month.

IT'S TIPPIN' 'TASTIC!!

Oooh, baby, she's got it! And so have we. I'm talking about the passcodes to the higher levels in Gremlin's attractive and original shoot-'em-up *Venus - The Fly Trap*. So here they are:

Level 2: MANTIDS
Level 3: CICADAS
Level 4: PSYLLIDS
Level 5: PIERIDS
Level 6: SATYRID
Level 7: LYCAENID
Level 8: PYRALID

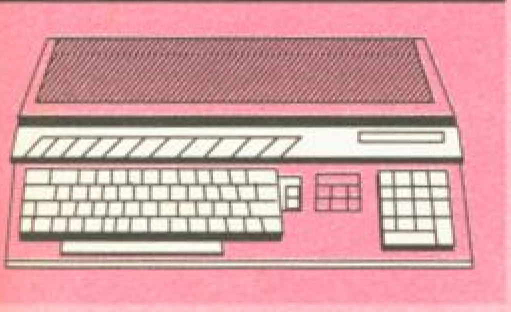
My word, just the sort of passcodes you'd have a jolly good chance of guessing, aren't they? Thanks to Sigi Goode of Deakin in Australia for those...

Yes, yet another letter from down-under! I think I get more letters from the antipodeans than the natives! Anyway, Sigi (?) also tells me that you can jump to the last level of Domark/Tengen's *Klax* by holding down the spacebar and the '4' key at the same time. As Sigi say, it makes the game pretty boring but there you go!

And a final "Hello" to Mark 'Madmark' Spiteei from Malta. He's one of the hordes who sent in a full solution to Psygnosis' *Shadow of the Beast 2*. Sorry, no prizes for first place 'cos Russell Lazzari and Philip Baxter got there before you all (see T'n'T) . But at least you got a name mention, eh 'Madmark'? So go say yah-boo-sucks to all your mates!

● Sam Vickers

ATARI ST



For this month's review of new Atari ST software we're concentrating on MIDI-based music products; there have been so many in the last couple of months that an update is sorely needed!For pros, Steinberg's *Cubase V2.0* sequencer is now available;the main update is the long-awaited addition of scoreprinting.

Other new features include IPS -Interactive Phrase Synthesis. This allows a musical phrase to be "filtered" through a series of processors using programmable harmonic and rhythmic rules altering the note length, position density, pitch, velocity and transposition, modified cyclically by "Low Frequency Oscillators", each with their own frequency and amplitude, then edited further. *Cubase V2.0* costs £500-odd, but there's now a cut-down file-compatible version for the 1 meg ST, Cubeat.

It's still pricey at £285, but has most of the features of Cubase, including 16x64 tracks, VISP (Visual Song Processing), MROS multi-tasking, human sync, key and grid editing, multiple MIDI channel recording, chord recognition and so on; it doesn't have scorewriting or some of the more advanced MIDI management functions. Hollis Research's Trackman is also up to V2.0, and you can now get a demo disk of this well-regarded sequencer, complete except for saving facilities (and it crashes after 20 minutes); also included on the disk is a fully-working patch librarian for the Roland D50, and over 500 patches for Yamaha 6-operator synths such as the DX7.

Take Control's excellent Atari ST scorewriter *Music Publisher* now has full MIDI implementation including note data input, playback of scores, and the ability to import MIDI disk files. The program now also allows import of graphics files in bit image and metafile formats, making the display options more flexible - scores can also be enlarged and reduced.MCMXCIX has announced the most professional music DTP package yet for the ST - *Passport Encore*. It's based on ideas developed in the Master Tracks Pro sequencer, and can intelligently transcribe and print out scores from Master Tracks Pro, Trax, and M.T. Jr. sequences, and MIDI standard files.

Encore requires a mono monitor and 1 meg memory, and can handle up to 64 musical "parts" at a time, using up to four voices per staff. Cost is £429. For budgeting musicians, there's Trax, an entry-level ST sequencer at £85. It looks very similar to *MasterTracks Pro*; it's file-compatible and has the same 64-track Track Sheet with functions such as MIDI channelization, program numbering, naming, mute, solo and loop; the graphic Song Editor, with cut/copy/paste functions; Step Editor, with click-and-drag event editing; the Tempo Conductor; MIDI data filter; 240 PPQN resolution and tape-transport style recording controls.

The most enjoyable music software program around is PG Music's *Band-in-a-Box*, distributed in the UK by Zone. BIAB does for computer/synthesizer systems what the "easy-play" options do for home keyboards; it provides a bass, chord and drum accompaniment for you to play a melody over.

You can tailor the program to work with the required synths, then assign MIDI channels for the bass, chord and drum parts. To write a song accompaniment, just type chord letters and symbols into the lead-sheet display grid, and select Play.

All familiar chord types are supported, and you can change the tempo, number of repeats and such like using dialogue boxes. An update available shortly (10 to registered users) includes multiple styles per song, tempo and patch changes, all of which can be saved as part of a disk file; variable time signatures, MIDI THRU option and a lyric facility. A more extensive update available later includes user-definable styles.You can buy *Band-in-a-Box* for an incredibly low £45, or £69 complete with two "MIDI Fake Books" each featuring 250 files of classic songs, normally £20 each separately, or £35 together. Evenlode Soundworks - 0993 898484 Hollis Research - 0481 711851 MCMXCIX - 081-963 0663 Take Control - 021-706 6085Zone Distribution - 081-766 6564 .

● Chris Jenkins

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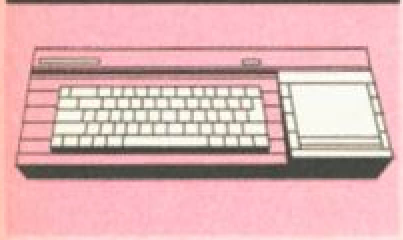

Well the New Year's most definitely with us now; every software company in the cosmos put their shoulders to the grindstone and their nose to the wheel to get all their big, Christmas games out of the door and onto the software shelves for the Yuletide games season.

And that's just what they did - isn't it? Until you realise that several companies put the cart before the horse - promising Christmas block-busters that never materialised?

Among a list of many games that failed to make the shelves before their shift-by dates ran out are the two of the largest companies in the biz; Ocean's ***Total Recall*** on the Speccy, was withdrawn at the last moment - I saw it at an early stage and can say that they've made a good move - it's being almost entirely rewritten for the Spectrum. And then there's ***ESWAT*** which US Gold withdrew from the race at the last second when they decided that the product wouldn't be finished in time.

Both companies have been promising the two products for some time but have had problems producing good quality games within their deadlines.

There's still a contraction going on in the Spectrum market. We all know about the (doomed?) future of the +3. Or do we? Ending production is really no great problem in itself because if Amstrad cease production of the product, the mail order boys will continue to stock them for as long as demand continues. How will they do this? Well, the Japanese may take a leaf out of Alan Sugar's book, and produce the machine themselves. After all, the factory that makes all the components is in Taiwan, with the bits being put together at Amstrad. And, using the same reverse engineering as Amstrad, another company could easily re-start the old production line.

COMPILATION COMPLICATIONS

There are eager battles being fought between Spectrum titles at the moment as three magazines fight for a market that is only big enough for two. Software houses are having a battle too, with everyone trying to come up with new ideas to sell games. The recent transboard decision to increase full price games by a pound (which in terms of inflation seems almost sensible) shows the dizzy level of imagination shown in this department.

If you want imaginative marketing, then the big boys need look no further than the innovative CODEMASTERS. We all know that if you wait long enough, every full price game will eventually make it onto a budget label and be unleased into a thriving market that accounts for 70% of all games software sales in Britain.

So what's innovative about the Codies? They're the first company to come up with the idea of Budget compilations. Called the Quattro range, each tape has four budget games squeezed onto a single tape and cover a particular style of game, from Arcade to Combat, Adventure to Sports and so on with six different titles out at the moment. There are already 6 other titles to be released starting in the new year. All for the whizzy price of £2.99.

SAM OUTFOXES THE MARKET'S BOOT BOYS

Here's an interesting snippet of news for anyone thinking about buying a Sam Coupe. Rumours are afoot that MGT plan to upgrade the Sam in the new year to a full Megabyte of usable memory for only £70.

This would mean that the Sam's new price point with 1 Meg and a diskdrive would put it in competition with the Amiga and Atari - and with 1 Meg, it would mean that the mode 4 graphics (that are of a higher quality than either of its competitors) could be employed easily by games programmers utilising the Sam's better speed to move its 24K screen around smoothly, quickly and above all, far more colourfully than either the standard Atari or Amiga can.

GAMES WITHOUT FRONTIERS

So, what's happening in the Spectrum software market then? Well this month, sees the release of all the products that missed the Christmas bandwagon - although at the time of writing they still stand a slim chance.

F16 - The latest flight sim to take off on the Spectrum this month comes from Digital Integration. Flying the infamous American fighter in any one of five missions, with new variables being generated for each mission, there's a lot of flying hours here. There's a lot of waiting time too if you get the game on tape..

GAZZA 2 - Just when you though it was safe to cry in public, Paul 'Grizzling' Gascoigne makes his way back onto the Spectrum. Gazza 2 is actually very good. Its speed is excellent and the 3D perspective that made Gazza 1 so awful has been substituted for the very playable overhead view. It's just a pity whilst there's an option for two player games, only one of you can use a joystick. Mind you, using the keyboard could be ideal for away games...

That's your lot for another month. If you've got any news or view on the Speccy scene, drop me a line!

●Garth Sumpter

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LOMBARD

GAMEBOY

Last month's tips seem to go with a bang, judging by the bulging sacks we found ourselves with afterwards. (Mail sacks, that is!)

TURTLE POWER!

Those heroes in a half-shell seem to be a popular choice for Handheld freaks, eliciting a massive set of tips. JP Roche reckons that Bebop (level 2 guardian) can be defeated thus; "As soon as you land in the room at the end of level 2, jump up as Bebop runs in from the left. He will fure his laser so use your weapon to absorb the beams. Jump up and somersault over him as he runs to the left of the screen. He will turn and fire, so absorb the beams with your weapon and strike him when he approaches. Ne will retreat, fire and punch. Carry out the same procedure four times to defeat him."

Bonus levels can be obtained easily. Bonus game 1; In the first level, you've got to go right until you come across the first set of three barrels. Then you must jump in between the second and third barrel to destroy the second one. Now walk in the direction of the first barrel. Your turtle will flash and youll enter the bonus stage.

Bonus game 2 can be reached by walking right until you reach a piece of pipe above your head. Here, jump into the water. Don't jump up. Walk until you reach the wall. Again, the turtle will flash and you'll enter the bonus stage.

Bonus game 3 is found at the first level of the sewer stage 4. You have to walk until you meed the first set of bats. Now jump into the water and walk under the pike in the wall.

CODES CODES CODES!

Christoph Schussler from Germany has been beavering away on ***Puzznic*** and has kindly produced a massive set of passwords. Ready?

002 ITOHMIWA
003 SAWAITHO
004 GOTAGOTO
005 DON.DOKO
006 PUZZNIC.
007 YUPONTAN
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026 SERAHOSI
027 MUKASHI
028 ARU.TOKE
029 RONIOJII
030 SANTO.OB
031 AASANGA.
032 SUNOEIMA
033 SITAMARU
034 NINTENDO
035 GAMEBOY.
036 CHASE.HQ
037 BAKATONO
038 KODOMONI
039 MAKERUNA
040 HATTORI.
041 MEIJIN..
042 DONTMAID
043 UCHIMARA
044 NOGUNOGU
045 TENTSUKI
046 PENI.SCI
047 KYMO...
048 ICHINICH
049 IGANBARD
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051 MINSASAMA
052 NO.OKAGE
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064 ATENOHOD
065 O.YOROSH
066 IKOWONEGA
067 IMOUSHIA
068 GEMASU..
069 YONJUUME
070 NNO.SAIK
071 OUTOKUTE
072 NWA.NANT
073 ENDESHOU
074 HAGAKIWO
075 OKUTTEKU

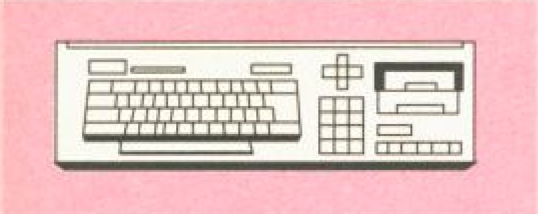
MOUND, MOUND, GET AMOUND, I GET AMOUND

And finally, there's a hint for players stuck in ***Nemesis*** from Konami from Ian Henderson. Ian says: "Towards the end of the second stage, there's a large mound hanging from the roof of the carvern which produces bad guys. It also has a ship underneath it. Shoot out the ship and the mound and fly into the remains of the mound to enter the bonus stage.

Thanks to all our tipsters this month. If you've got any game tips are are currently floundering in a gameboy game, drop me a line at the usual address.

●Richard Evans

AMSTRAD CPC



We've gone fanzine crazy this month, readers. The postbag yielded a number of enthusiastically written and photocopied fanzines exclusively for Amstrad owners. First up, Wolfgang Rottger would like me to mention his own 'zine, CPC Power Internatonal, which can be obtained by anyone sending 4 International reply-paid coupons to:

CPC Power International, Im Vogelsang, 17 W-5000, Koln 50, Germany.

Those planning to contribute to or purchase acopy of Wolfgang's organ should be made aware, of course, that although it's packed with tips and letters and useful programming advice, it's all in German.

By far the best British fanzine to arrive is Play Mates, edited by Carl Surry from Barnet. Carl's mag is heavily games orientated and has a club-by feel which is a must for any good fanzine. Currently up to number four, Play Mates, as you would expect offers its readers a tips-line, depthy reviews of new Amstrad games and utilities, and some useful art-tips for those bent on producing a masterpiece in bytes.

You can get yourswlf a copy of Play Mates by sending 70p to:

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COMPETITION

So you reckon your fanzine is the best do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it. Send us a copy of your fanzine, together with a list of points on why you think it covers the current Amstrad scene better than any other. We'll be awarding a prize and printing extracts from the best entry we receive in the next ACE Lines.

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CONSOLE YOURSELF

Gremlin Graphics have been busily working away on their first project for the Amstrad Console, and hasn't it been worth the wait!

From the size of the packet to the style of the box artwork, this feels like a very Japanese product. Gremlin have certainly taken the cartridge market by the horns.

In the game, you play Hiro, last of the Battleknights. You must collect the 16 fragments of the shattered fireblade, in order to avenge the horrific and brutal slaying of your fellow countrymen.

You begin the game alone and unarmed un an apocalyptic wasteground, populated by nothing except horrible little mechanised scorpions. Touching these cyber-beasts will incur heavy hit points and you'll also probably get dragged backwards too.

After a little practise, it becomes easy to avoid these suckers and you'll swiftly find yourself exploring the network of underground tunnels and corridors which make up the evil warlord's empire.

Life in the tunnels is short. Enemy soldiers lurk around every turning, and you'll need to collect all the available weapons to survive.

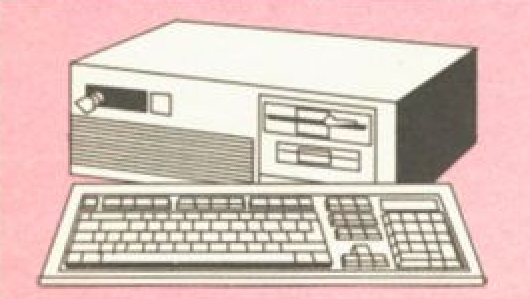
Some of the screen-flicking, even on the console is a bit poor, with the screen building up as you materialise on it. However, the detail of the backgrounds and variety of the enemies and traps you have to deal with puts Switchblade right up there with Rick Dangerous 2.

Obviously, collecting the 16 fragments of the Fireblade is far fom easy. Simply staying alive long enough to collect one seems like a tall order when you start, but the more you persevere, the greater the rewards.

Heartly congratulations go to Gremlin for a leaping headfirst into the consoles market rather than simply standing on the sidelines like so may other publishers. Full review next issue.

●Richard Evans

IBM PC



It must be hell if you're one of the many PC owners who's still working with a monchrome screen. Because no matter how easy on the eye your black and white (or for that matter amber or green) display may be, you end up looking wistfully at the glorious 256-colour VGA screenshots which adorn all computer magazines these days like a poor child with his nose pressed against the window of a sweet shop.

But do you really need all of those colours on your monitor to have a good session at your keyboard. No of course you don't: saying that colourful games are 'better' than their monochrome counterparts is like saying that Santa Claus The Movie is better than Casablanca.

Although good use of colour can enhance a playable game, if the original idea has what it takes then it doesn't matter if the display is the colour of a baboon's ass.

So now, for the first time ever, ACE is going to induct some members into its Hercules Hall Of Fame. The following list makes no claims to being exhaustive: it's simply a guide to a few already great games which lose nothing but their colour when they make the jump from one of the 'Gee-Ay' family to Hercules.

XENON II - MEGABLAST

The Bitmap Brothers' definitive shoot 'em up is all the more impressive on the PC than ity is on other machines because of the general lack of competition in this field. It seems that no matter what the configuration of machine it plays superbly, and the lack of colour is compensated for by a good use of grey shading. In fact, the only thing that this monster blaster is missing is support for any of the major sound boards - but then, if you've got a mono display then you're hardly likely to have one of those, are you? Xenon II is published by Image Works (071) 928 1454.

SHUFFLEPUCK CAFE

Although this isn't exactly the greatest game on Earth, it does offer a little short-lived arcade-style distraction... and it has one positive advantage in that it's actually better in mono than it is in colour! In EGA colour, the table on which this game of intergalactic air hockey is played out is a serious strain on the eyes: Hercules monochrome however, suits the game's atmosphere perfectly, making the board clearer and your opponents look very sinister indeed. Prospective Shufflepuckers should call Domark on (081) 780 2222.

SCRABBLE DE LUXE

Leisure Genius (part of the Virgin stable, on (071) 727 8070) specialises in adaptation of popular board games. And although this is soon to be superseded by Ultimate Scrabble, and this version will probably end up on a budget label pretty soon, this one in particular works just as well (if not a little better) whether coloured or not.

PIPEMANIA

Empire's plumbing puzzler has just picked up a prestigious Tilt d'Or award - and luckily this wasn't for its exceptional use of colour. Rather than simply changing the colours to greys, Hercules Pipemania utilises an all-new character and graphics set: whereas the colour version can carry off some extraneous graphical bits and bobs, this two-colour effort uses a plain grid and simplified piping to make the graphics as clear as possible with no loss of playability. If you're interested, contact Empire on (0268) 541126.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Broderbund's Middle-Eastern arcade adventure has caused quite a stir in the ACE office (as you may have noticed), and for once you owners of mono-screened PCs aren't going to be left in the dark as to what all the fuss is about. Although Hercules Prince Of Persia uses a smaller screen size than its couloured brothers, it's been rescaled perfectly and the main character still moves with the grace and dexterity of an olympic gymnast. Like all Broderbund games, this one is distributed in these parts by Domark - (081) 780 2222.

So, there we are. If you're willing to hunt around, it's perfectly possible to olay lots of high-quality games in Hercules. There's no need for non-vga players to lose out on the fun had by their colour counterparts.

●Ciaran Brennan

C64

Interesting comments from Anil Khedun on the 64 PD scene this month;

"A lot of you were going to do so many thinkgs with your Commodore 64s. It was thought to be pursle for educational purposes, or at least that's what you told those who bought it for you. You would arganise your accounts, make music, write letters tc. That was in the beginning, but now people have said that the C64 has a very short life span. But that doesn't have to be the case

Public Domain to the rescue! Surprosingly, a lot of 64 owners know nothing about what is available. It's time to put that right.

"When you say "public doman", what do you think of? PC? Amiga? ST? That's what the majority of users would say anyway. If you've come across the wide variety of weird and wonderful demos and programs that you can get for the 64, you'd also know that there'sa lot of life in the old beast yet.

WHAT YOU GET

'Public Domain software has a wide range of uses. You want to do some programming? There are BASIC toolkits and machine-code monitors around to make life that little bit easier. You can also find a small handful of games that were produced specifically for public domain, and I must say that the ones I have seen are of a good standard, so maybe you'd like to try them out. Is that all? Well, no. A large spread of word processors, spreadsheets, databases, art utilities, music routines. The list is almost endless.

Cassette users are catered for, but the list of programs around for tape-based machines is limited. Answer; get yourself a disk drive. You'll prolong the life of your machine, and open the door to a flood of new software.

Games will still be produced, of course, but there's nothing like a bit of funky music with flashy graphics to make you gasp. I've seen a lot of demos and they all seem to come from our European counterparts; Denmark, Germany, Norway etc. And they compete with each other to show off their talent. Exciting stuff!

While there will always be music and graphics demos for the Amiga, some of the finer 64 programs genuinely push the machine to its limits. A lot of these can be found on Compunet and can be downloaded, but for people who don't have access to a modem, the public domain is where a large number of these demos and other programs can be found.

There aren't many PD clubs around that cater solely for 64 users, so if you know of anyone who distributes stuff, write in to ACE and let the world know they exist. The 64 will be supported for a long while yet. Remember. Public Domain is only as good as the people who will continue to support it. Long live the Commodore 64!

TELL ME MORE!

If it's demos you're after, then I heartily recommend WICKED PD. Write to:

Wicked PD
PO BOX 633
Basildon
Essex.

Also try Compunet's pages. They're full of good demos, utilities and general tips. Write to:

Compunet
Unit 26
Sheraton Business Centre
Wadsworth Road,
Perivale
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If you would like a copy of Demo of the Year II (a compilation of European demos from 1988), just send a blank disk and a stamp to me and I'll send you a taster of what's in store.

Anil Khendum (Demo)
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ACE CROSSWORD

Oops...No PC Engine column this month – our sincere apologies and a Happy New Year to the Post Office (sarcastic - us?). So we've squeezed the Crossword oto this page instead. Get our pens out...and the PC Engine column will be back next month.

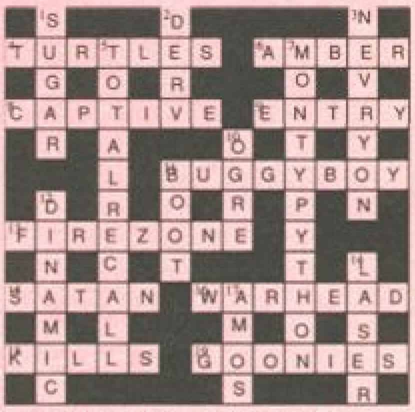
Our monthly prize word puzzler, set by the inimitable MIPS

CLUES ACROSS

5 Software house company boy appearing in ACE (8)
7 Heroic saga seen in the pictures (4)
8 Go in - here's the key (5)
9 Game sugar and I'd programmed (7)
10 Hatred Pat developed for computer game (5,4)
11 The cry of the turtle (9)
14 Never at odds with this game (7)
15 Game played amongst party people (1-4)
17 Man, for one, lies about (4)
18 Game cub troop played (5,3)

CLUES DOWN

1 Computer image of spinning coin (4)
2 Fear Tom's first mistake (6)
3 Make fun of nudes dancing on top of platform (4,2)
4 Set right in new musical game from Microstyle (8)
6 Mindscape product found in some games (5)
10 A test Ada formulated for software house (4,4)
11 Leading company lawyers always appear smart (6)
12 Get riches by breaking the law (6)
13 Psygnosis game's new intro (5)
16 You might dip into game from Firebird! (4)



Congrats to Chris Hemingway of Burnham-on-Crouch for correctly solving December '90's crossword (shown above). Your prize is on it's way!

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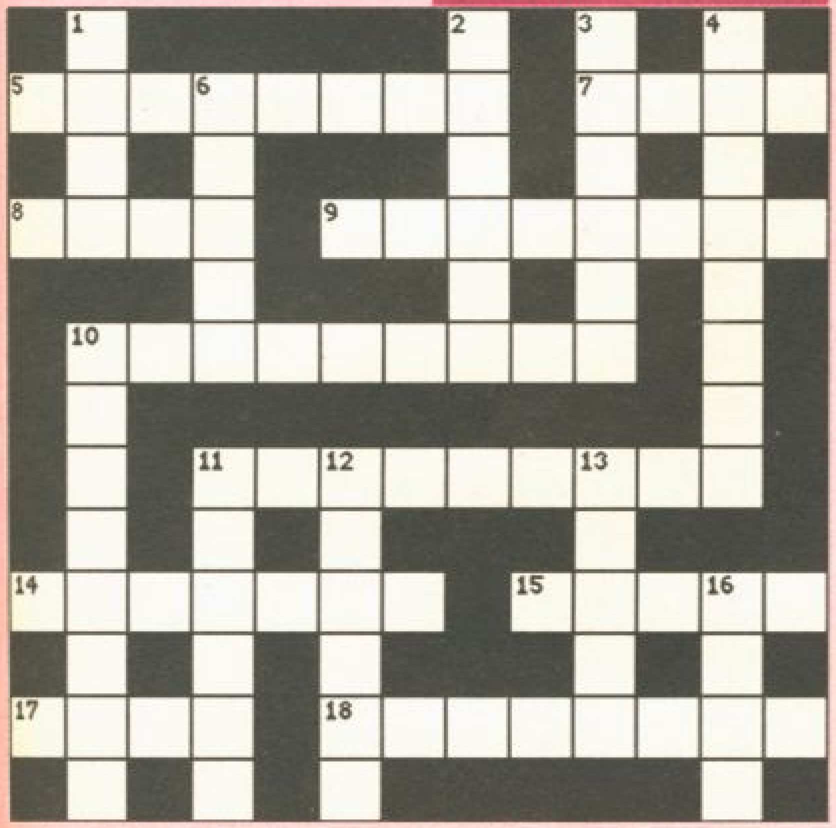

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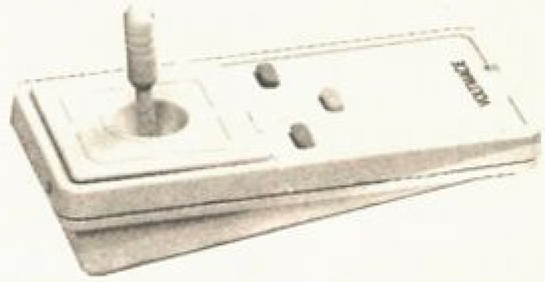

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HOT OFF THE SHELF

Got lots of Xmas gift money burning a hole in your pocket? Don't waste it on a duff title that won't even keep you hooked until teatime - look through this list, make a choice and buy with confidence!

The list you see here includes the highest-rated titles featured in ACE over the past three months, as well as some of the older but essential buys. All you see here should be available from your local dealer now.

B.A.T.
Ubisoft ● Amiga £34.99 ● Atari ST £34.99 ● PC £TBA ● C64 £TBAdk/cart
Set in the 22nd Century, you play an agent of the Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters, or B.A.T. for short. The arch-criminal Vrangor (made-up name!) is holding the planet Selenia, home of the galaxy's major businesses, to ransom with chemical weapons. Lose Selenia and there'll be galaxy-wide trouble. You've got to find Vrangor and stop him - quick! Two years in the making, all that effort shows in this graphic adventure *par excellence*. Every location and event is depicted graphically, with all game interaction carried out using the mouse. Not so much a game, more a way of life. As an added bonus, there's a plug-in soundcard to give the humble ST Amiga-quality samples.
★ ACE RATING 908 ON ATARI ST

BATTLE CHESS 2
Electronic Arts ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £29.99
Sequel-itis spreads from Hollywood to the computer industry! This time round the rules are based on the Chinese variant of Chess, which introduces some new moves, has a river bisecting the board (which some pieces can't cross) and limits the King's movement to an 'Imperial Palace'. As before the board is viewed in 3D, with all the pieces 'taking' each other in a variety of amusing and well-animated ways. While a bit slow and irritating running from floppies due to all the swapping, a hard disc shows the game to be far faster and more lethal than normal Chess. A good purchase for jaded Chess fans.
★ ACE RATING 895 ON IBM PC

BUCK ROGERS: COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY
SSI/US Gold ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £TBA ● C64 £TBA
The year is 2456, and Buck Rogers, tactical genius and fearless defender of freedom, is defrosted from cryogenic suspension to help lead rebels on a ravaged Earth to victory and freedom from a tyrannical government. An RPG with similarities to the SSI *AD&D* games, the action is viewed in familiar pseudo-3D. All interaction is menu driven, with selections made by clicking the mouse. The number of locations are many and varied, and most are introduced by an attractive picture. Fans of this genre should be more than happy with this, and the space setting makes a welcome change from the usual medieval fantasy.
★ ACE RATING 885 ON AMIGA

CAPTIVE
Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST/E £24.99 ● PC £29.99
Another in the ever expanding number of RPGs portrayed using first-person perspective. Captive, written by veteran programmer Tony Crowther, pits you against hordes of rampaging aliens, with nothing to defend you but a briefcase. This briefcase, however, contains a computer giving you remote control over a four-droid team with which you must free yourself from the fortress where you are imprisoned . Excellent bitmapped graphics, atmospheric real-time stereo sound and a total of 65000 levels to explore place *Captive* very much in the ACE-rated category.
★ ACE RATING 930 ON AMIGA

COVERT ACTION
Microprose ● PC £39.99
Yet another secret agent game! You play Max Remington, ex-CIA man, who is now earning a crust as a undercover investigator. However, Max is known to waive the fee for the President of the United States. On offer are four skill levels, three mission areas, three crime types and over a dozen enemy operatives to contend with. As you would expect from Microprose there's a wealth of detail and the tasks on offer are going to require many months of work to crack. Go to it, Max.
★ ACE RATING 902 ON IBM PC

CORPORATION
Core Design ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £29.99
This role-playing cybernetic extravaganza from CORE pushes the limits of previous RPG's just that bit further. *Corporation* is a 3-D exploration, puzzle-orientated arcade combat game (?) in the mould made traditional by the original Dungeon Master RPG. Your objective is to find and remove an embryo belonging to the ultimate biogenetic killing machine, bred by the UCC Corp. Light-source shaded raphics and sound of film-like quality, along with excellent playability and an intuitive control method all contributed in pushing *Corporation* over the 900 mark.
★ ACE RATING 945 ON AMIGA

DAMOCLES
Novagen ● Atari ST £24.95 ● Amiga £24.95 ● PC £TBA
This unusual combination of flight sim and adventure game, and sequel to the well-received *Mercenary*, has been in development for a couple of years now, but the resulting game has been worth the wait. The wireframe graphics of the original game have been replaced by solid 3D vector graphics, but they are just as fast. There are now nine planets to explore instead of one city, so there is plenty of long term challenge here.
★ ACE RATING 935 ON ATARI ST

F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER
Microprose ● Atari ST £29.99 ● Amiga £29.99 ● PC £39.99
A program that could well be described as the Flight Simulator's Flight Simulator. The PC version has enjoyed much success since its

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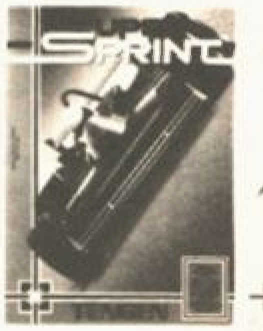

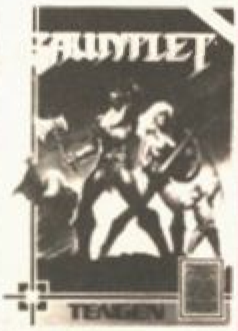

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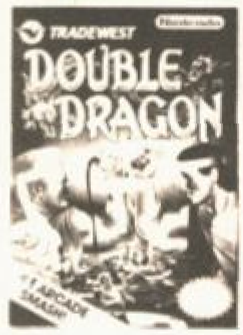

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launca year ago, and now it's brothers on the ST and Amiga look set to do the same. The sim is based around the much talked about (or perhaps that be whispered about) Stealth Fighter. It boasts four huge sceanrios with hundreds of missions, and plenty of detail. If you are looking for the definitive flight sim, then you can't go far wrong with this one.

★ **ACE RATING 935 ON IBM PC**

4D SPORTS BOXING

Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99

This violent clash between two solid-polygon generated pugilists is the best rendition of the 'noble art' yet seen on a home computer. The use of ploygons allows the action to be viewed from absolutely any angle, and a video playback option allows you to watch that decisive upper-cut again and again. Highly realistic, with a huge range of moves and a lot of work to be put in if you're going to become World Champ!

★ **ACE RATING 900 ON IBM PC**

4D SPORTS DRIVING

Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99

A 3D-polygon racing game - and arguably the best yet, providing far more depth than its nearest rival, *Indy 500* though how it compares to *Hard Drivin' 2* has yet to be seen. Can be played against the clock or another driver, in which case each designs a course, trying to exploit the weaknesses of the other (i.e fear of heights!). Both drivers then race on the two tracks. Spectacular wins and crashes can be viewed from any angle in the playback option. A successful mix of simulation and knock-about fun.

★ **ACE RATING 880 ON IBM PC**

HARPOON

Mirrorsoft/PSS ● PC £29.99

Quite simply the best naval simulation to be released for the General Public. The battleset that comes with the game deals with East-West conflict in the North Sea, but other battlesets will be available soon. A clever system of three map types is used to effectively manage each mission. The nice thing about *Harpoon* is that the computer takes care of all the boring mechanics, allowing you to concentrate on broad tactics. A must buy for anyone interested in modern navel warfare.

★ **ACE RATING 940 ON IBM PC**

THE IMMORTAL

Electronic Arts ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99

Nothing new in the plot department, unfortunately. Old wizard...enter dungeon...defeat monsters...avoid traps...solve puzzles...rescue Grand Wizard...etc,etc. However, the presentation is something else. An isometric-3D angle is used to view the events, and your character moves around it freely, combating monsters and so on. Every move is beautifully animated. There are only 50 locations to visit, but every one is going to take a lot of work to puzzle through. **WARNING!** - this program only works on 1Mb machines!

★ **ACE RATING 910 ON ATARI ST**

INDIANAPOLIS 500

Electronic Arts ● PC £24.95 ● Amiga £24.95

The ultimate racing game. *Indy 500* uses state of the art solid vector graphics which really add something to the high speed action. As in Activision's *Bomber* there are a variety of out-of-cockpit views to select from. the realistic handling of the cars will have you coming back to this game time and time again.

★ **ACE RATING 935 ON IBM PC**

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE

Gremlin Graphics ● 16-bit formats £24.99 ● 8-bit formats £10.99

Remember *Pit Stop II*? Gremlin obviously do, because this game employs a similar split-screen effect as that ageing classic to allow two players to race against each other at the same time. This, and the fact that the 3D effect actually does convince you that you're travelling at the speed on your meter, puts Lotus way ahead of the rest of the pack. With 32 tracks, 3 difficulty levels and the option to choose between automatic and manual gears, this is one racing game with fair a bit of mileage.

★ **ACE RATING 875 ON AMIGA**

MIDWINTER

Microprose ● Atari ST £29.99 ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £TBA

The latest mega hit from top programmer Mike Singleton, creator of *Lords of Midnight*. The game is set on a frozen island in the future. Your task is to recruit members of the Peace Force to fight off General Masters' invasion force. This is done by managing people and resources via a series of Fractal Maps and menus. The game has disappointing sound, but nice 3D graphics, and enough solid gameplay to keep you going for months.

★ ACE RATING 948 ON ATARI ST

MYTH

System 3 ● 8-bit formats £8.99cs/£14.99dk

The game that pushes the C64 and Spectrum further than they have ever been before. Fight your way through several time zones to reach the ultimate confrontation with the god Dameron. The game is captivating not only because of it's size and depth but also because of the superbly animated sprites and sheer playability.

★ ACE RATING 925 ON C64

POWERMONGER

Electronic Arts ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99

A new computer classic, with one of the highest ACE ratings ever. You play a warlord, exiled from your homeland along with twenty followers, who has just landed on the shores of 200 islands, ripe for conquering. Unfortunately the current residents are not quite so keen on your enforced leadership, and will do all they can to resist you. Using a similar viewpoint to *Populous*, the landscape is here polygon-based and thus can be manipulated in just about any way you require. The excellent visuals are supported by highly atmospheric sound. All control is by mouse, and couldn't be easier. To play it is to worship it. An absolutely essential buy.

★ ACE RATING 973 ON AMIGA

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Broderbund/Domark ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● IBM PC £24.99

A game that could so easily go unnoticed and unloved by the shelf-scouring hordes looking for the latest licence. The graphics, when static, are fairly unimpressive (although they do get a lot better in later levels), but when they move... The animation as you guide a young Prince through umpteen levels of platforms, pits, spikes and swordsmen is quite excellent and life-like. And the gameplay, although it may sound uninspired, is as good as the graphics. Some of the action has a real cliff-hanger aspect to it. A gem.

★ ACE RATING 915 ON AMIGA

RICK DANGEROUS 2

Microstyle ● 16-bit formats £24.99 ● 8-bit formats £9.99cs/£14.99dk

After his Indy-inspired adventures in the prequel, Rick looks to the stars and dons leotard and blond quiff for his second run-in with the Fat Man. Set over five levels, the game generously allows the player to take on the first four in any order. The graphics and sounds are nice, but not stunning. With platform games playability is everything, and *RD2* has it in buckets.

★ ACE RATING 870 ON ATARI ST

SAVAGE EMPIRE

Origin/Mindscape ● PC £34.99 ● Amiga £TBA

Using the *Ultima VI* interface, Origin have taken a side-step from the medieval world of their previous games, and now plunge you into a nightmare scenario where you control a party of characters mysteriously transported to a dinosaur-infested Lost World, full to the brim with new quests. A rollicking good yarn well told and - hard to believe we know - actually *better* than *Ultima VI*.

★ ACE RATING 955 ON IBM PC

SIMULCRA

Microstyle ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99

In the future, physical conflict is a thing of the past, with all wars being fought in Cyberspace. However, a virus has caused the simulated battles to spill into 'true' reality. You must enter the 'battle matrix', destroy the rampaging simulcraft and ultimately the matrix itself. Although basically a shoot-'em-up, with the usual variety of add-ons to pick up, Simulcra's claim to fame is the incredible rotating patchwork 3D world where the combat takes place. Fast and furious action, excellent aesthetics and a slight strategy element make this one of the best games of the year.

★ ACE RATING 936 ON ATARI ST

SORCERORS GET ALL THE GIRLS

Legend/Microprose ● Currently only available on PC in the US. Call US 'Prose on 0101 301 771 6700 for mail order details.

Set in a medieval fantasy world, you play a student at Sorceror University who wakes one day to find the campus deserted. Something terrible's happened - and it's up to you to save the day... This has all the qualities you'd expect from an adventure written by ex-Infocom staff: it's big, well-written, with lots of (sometimes

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Shadow of the Beast (Amiga only)	N.A	9.99
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ACE 02/90

quite dreadful!) humour, graphics (occasionally animated) and - most importantly - an engaging plot with loads of sub-scenarios. The only minus point is the antiquated parser, which had to be told to do *everything*.

★ ACE RATING 895 ON IBM PC

SPEEDBALL 2

Mirrorsoft ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £TBA

The sequel to the Bitmap Bros' violent '88 hit. Basically more of the same but with improved graphics, a bigger multi-directional scrolling pitch (festooned with bumpers and ball energisers), extra power-ups and armour to pick up or buy between games, smoother control and a depth-enhancing player-manager element. Highly playable, and the power-ups do have a noticeable effect on the game. More fun that beating up your kid brother. Or even better, play your brother in two-play mode *then* beat him up!

★ ACE RATING 889 ON ATARI ST

SPINDIZZY WORLDS

Activision ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99

Yet another sequel (sort of) to Paul Shirley's original 8-bit game. This one sees the return of GERALD (the un-contrived **G**eographic **E**nvironmental **R**econnaisance **A**nd **L**and-mapping **D**evice), who resembles a spinning top and you have to guide around 32 multidirectional-scrolling 'worlds' of precipitous platforms, icy ramps, lifts, switches and roaming nasties in a search for diamonds. A clever mix of arcade thrills and puzzle-solving that requires you put in a little effort at first, but will make you glad you did in the end.

★ ACE RATING 890 ON AMIGA AND 880 ON ATARI ST

TEAM YANKEE

Empire International ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £34.99

The interesting use of 3D bit-mapped graphics to depict the action rather than the expected polygons pays off in this involving tank war simulation. Although they get a little blocky close-up, this is more than compensated for by their speed and detail (half the trick is being able to correctly identify your own vehicles and not fire on them!). You control a four tank platoon, which you can switch between with ease, on a wide range of missions. Early accessibility but mounting complexity as you gain experience make this a perfect purchase for any strategist from novice to master.

★ ACE RATING 893 ON AMIGA

ULTIMA VI

Origin/Mindscape ● Atari ST £TBA ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £34.99 ● C64 £TBA

The ultimate rôle playing game. Sixteen thousand objects, two hundred and fifty characters, unlimited encounters, a quest that will take months to solve, and graphics better than you'll see on any other game of this type. The Ultima series of RPGs go from strength to strength. Join forces with Lord British and once more enter the fray... unbeatable stuff! And if you find it's to your taste, the icing on the cake is that Origin are now produci cenarios using the same system: *Savage Empire* is already out...see ACE issue 39.

★ ACE RATING 950 ON IBM PC

WING COMMANDER

Origin/Mindscape ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £34.99

Another 3D space combat game, but any sense of deja vu is completely dispelled by the use of stunning ray-traced and digitised graphics for the spaceships. They rotate, shrink and grow with amazing speed and fluidity. Animated scenes punctuate the action and present the first true cinematic experience on a home computer. The multitude of missions mean this isn't a game of surface gloss. Sadly only best appreciated on a high speed PC.

★ ACE RATING 949 ON IBM PC

WONDERLAND

Magnetic Scrolls ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £34.99

The Scrolls, having stunned the world with *The Pawn* way back in 1987, return with a new classic. An adventure game based on the famous novel *Alice in Wonderland*, the plot follows the book enough to retain its weird flavour but not so slavishly as to make it solvable by simply knowing the story. The lavish text, teeming with hundreds of tough (but logical) puzzles, is accompanied by a number of stunning animated graphic scenes. All adventure fans kneel and pray - an essential buy.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON IBM PC

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ACE DIARY

JANUARY

6 - 12 JANUARY SOFTWARE RELEASES

WEEK'S RELEASES AT A GLANCE

Titus: ***Dick Tracy*** **(Amstrad GX4000 £24.99, C64, Spectrum £10.99 tape/£14.99 disk; ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Shoot 'em up based on the Beatty/Madonna film.**

Software Business: ***Tarot*** **(ST, Amiga £24.95). Arcade-style scroller.**

Thalion: ***Enchanted Land*** **(ST £24.99). Appealing run-around game with cutesy cartoon-style characters.**

Virgin: ***Diplomacy*** **(C64 £10.99 tape, £14.99 disk). Belated appearance for C64 version of classic board game.**

Sunday 6
Twelfth Night: time to take all those tired looking decorations down. Football: FA Cup third round matches take place.

Monday 7

Tuesday 8
Birthday of Elvis Presley, 1935
Birthday of David Bowie, 1947

Wednesday 9

Thursday 10

Friday 11

Saturday 12

Sunday 13

14 - 20 JANUARY SOFTWARE RELEASES

WEEK'S RELEASES AT A GLANCE

Domark: ***Hard Drivin' 2*** **(ST, Amiga £24.99, PC £29.99). More courses, a design-your-own-course facility, and two-player, two-machine option.**

Psygnosis Sizzlers: ***Baal*** **(ST, Amiga, PC £9.99). Rereleased on new budget label at new budget price.**
Ballistix **(ST, Amiga, PC £9.99).**
Blood Money **(ST, Amiga, PC £9.99).**

Palace: ***Dragon's Breath*** **(PC £29.99)**

Virgin: ***Gemini Wing*** **(Spectrum, C64, CPC tape only £2.99; ST, Amiga £7.99). Budget rerelease.**

Monday 14

Tuesday 15

Wednesday 16
Prohibition began in the USA on this day in 1920.

Thursday 17

Friday 18

Saturday 19

Sunday 20

21 - 27 JANUARY SOFTWARE RELEASES

WEEK'S RELEASES AT A GLANCE

Psygnosis Sizzlers: ***Infestation*** **(ST, Amiga, PC £9.99).**
Menace **(ST, Amiga, PC £9.99);** ***Stryx*** **(ST, Amiga, PC £9.99).**

16-Blitz: ***Yes Prime Minister*** **(PC £4.99). Type-in adventure based on TV series.**

Magnetic Scrolls: ***Wonderland*** **(Amiga £29.99). Innovative graphic/text adventure, based on Lewis Carroll's Alice books, using Scrolls' own windowing and multi-menu environment.**

Image Works: ***Back to the Future 3*** **(Spectrum, C64, CPC £9.99 tape/£14.99 disk; ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Shoot 'em up chase game which follows the Wild West theme of the film.**

US Gold/Lucasfilm: ***Secret of Monkey Island*** **(ST, Amiga £24.99).**
Secret of the Luftwaffe **(ST, Amiga £24.99).**

Monday 21
Martin Luther King Day (USA). Terry Waite disappeared in Beirut on this day in 1987.

Tuesday 22

Wednesday 23

Thursday 24

Friday 25
Roll out the Haggis - it's Burns Night.
Cricket: England vs Australia, fourth test match begins in Adelaide.

Saturday 26
Australia Day.
National Day, India.

Sunday 27
American Football: Superbowl XXV.

28 JAN – 3 FEB SOFTWARE RELEASES

WEEK'S RELEASES AT A GLANCE

Domark: ***MiG 29 Fulcrum*** **(ST, Amiga £34.99; PC £39.99). Flight sim based on the renowned Soviet air fighter**
.

Krisalis: ***World Championship Boxing Manager*** **(PC £24.99). Released by Goliath Games last year on ST and Amiga; Krisalis snapped up the PC rights.**

Virgin: ***Judge Dredd*** **(Spectrum, C64, CPC £10.99 tape/£14.99 disk; ST, Amiga £24.99). Patrol the mean streets in bash 'em game licensed form the comic strip.**

Monday 28
The US space shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after lift-off on this day in 1986.

Tuesday 29

Wednesday 30

Thursday 31

FEBRUARY

Friday 1
Cricket: England vs Australia fifth test match begins in Perth.

Saturday 2
Candlemas Day

Sunday 3
Eighth Sunday before Easter

4 - 10 FEBRUARY SOFTWARE RELEASES

WEEK'S RELEASES AT A GLANCE

Bitmap Brothers: ***Gods*** **(ST, Amiga £24.99). Arcade adventure with a classical Greek flavour.**

Image Works: ***Cadaver*** **(PC £29.99). Bitmap Bros' arcade adventure set in cavernous terrain.**

Krisalis: ***Hill Street Blues*** **(ST, Amiga, PC £24.99). Law enforcement in the Hill Street precinct as you play Frank Furillo, looking after up to 1,200 computer generated vehicles and people.**

Image Works: ***Battle Master*** **(PC £29.99).**
Final Battle **(PC £29.99).**
Theme Park Mystery **(PC £29.99).**
Killing Cloud **(ST, Amiga £24.99)**

PSS: ***Champion of the Raj*** **(ST, Amiga, 24.99, PC £29.99). Level 9 developed graphic adventure set in British-occupied India.**

Virgin: ***Supremacy*** **(PC £29.99). Highly complex game ofintergalactic trading and domination.**
Fist of Fury **(Spectrum tape only £9.99, C64, CPC tape £10.99/disk £14.99; ST, Amiga £24.99). Compilation featuring** ***Double Dragon II, Ninja Warriors, Dynamite Dux*** **and** ***Shinobi.***

Monday 4
National Day, Sri Lanka

Tuesday 5

Wednesday 6
Waitangi Day, New Zealand.
England play Cameroon in a friendly at Wembley.

Thursday 7

Friday 8

Saturday 9

Sunday 10

Planning an event?

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ACE DEALS

Lots of post-Xmas offers here! Check 'em out!

It's a great time for bargain hunters. All those goodies that never made your Christmas stocking can now be snapped up at a cut-down price with some judicious shopping around.

Software Circus' bonanza sale has already kicked off, with some great deals on ST, Amiga and PC software in its London-based stores (store locations are given below).

The Microbyte chain will be holding sales in most outlets throughout January, along with a special double Collect'n'Select stamp promo. Pick up a Collect'n'Select folder from the store and then each time you make a purchase you'll be given stamps to stick in it. Amass a certain number of stamps and you can trade in the folder for free products. Double Collect'n'Select means more stamps for your purchases.

In the last week of Jan, the Virgin Games Centres' sales begin in all stores around the country. Virgin promises oodles of software, a few bargain consoles, and add-ons such as joysticks going for a song.

As for special offers on particular games, these are notoriously difficult to arrange at this time of year, thanks to the phenomenon of 'Christmas slippage' - products due before Christmas that mysteriously creep into shops in January. However, Virgin is planning (yet another) giant set of special offers on Sega consoles for the first two weeks of 1991 - so check individual stores for details.

Software Circus is taking heart from the increasing popularity of the PC-compatibles for entertainment junkies, and will be featuring some new US imports in its stores round about now. Also, Software Circus should have a new store opening soon, probably in the City of London area, so if you work round there, you'll be able to go software shopping in your lunch hour. Full details in this column as soon the plans are finalised.

On the hardware side, Computer Store's Amiga Megabundle is still on sale. For £799 you can buy a pack including the Amiga 500, colour monitor and Citizen printer, complete with blank disks, dust cover, mouse mat and printer paper.

There are Microbyte stores in the Arndale Centre, Manchester; the Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham; Kirkgate, Wakefield; the Metro Centre, Gateshead; the Greenmarket, Newcastle Upon Tyne; the Kirkgate Centre, Bradford; the Bull Ring Centre, Birmingham; the County Arcade, Leeds; Pasture Road, Goole; Meadow Hall Centre, Sheffield; St John's Centre, Liverpool, and St George's Centre, Preston.

Virgin has Games Centre on London's Oxford Street (at Marble Arch, within the Megastore, and at No. 100), Bristol, Kingston and Oxford, and also in Megastores in Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Cardiff, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow (at Union St and Argyle St), Leeds, and Nottingham.

Both Software Circus outlets are in London's West End; one in The Plaza, Oxford Street, the other at 282, High Holborn, London WC1.

The Computer Store chain is based in Yorkshire, with shops at Printing Office St, Doncaster; Ivegate, Bradford; Trinity St Arcade, Leeds; Market Place, Huddersfield; Westmoreland St, Wakefield; St Sampson's Square, York; The Woolshops, Halifax; Market St, Barnsley; High Street, Scunthorpe; Pinstone Street, Sheffield, and the Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham.

All offers and promos are subject to stock availability. Although we do our best to ensure our information is accurate at the time of going to press, ACE cannot take any responsibility for changes or cancellations to dealers' plans.

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Stuck in an adventure? Write in with the name of the game and the nature of your problem. Be as specific as possible and I'll do my best to answer (on these pages only so no SAEs please), and if I don't know the answer, I know a man who........! News, tips, gossip, anecdotes and adventuring trivia are also all most welcome. Write to me, Pat Winstanley, Adventureline, Pink Box, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU

NOW HEAR THIS!

If you want to contribute to these pages, get your pen out and start scribling! Particularly welcome are short, self-contained hints and single problem solutions. I'm also interested to hear of PD and Shareware programs - the best will be reviewed (space permitting), as I've done with *Jungle Bungle* here. So get in touch!

CAPTIVE

This month I've been plugging away at CAPTIVE and in the course of seeking help have discovered a handy hint for starting off with stronger than usual characters. If you name an android "ANN DROID" you'll end up with attributes of 6, 15 and 15 - quite a flying start. There is also a name based on Batman which creates good attributes - has anyone found a name which will give a straight 15 across the board?

Still on Captive, once you collect some firearms, watch where the shots go. Weapons such as the Hunter shoot high, while Magnums shoot low. On one of the early planets you'll be confronted by floating monsters which are inaccessible to handguns unless you use the Anti- Grav to turn upside down. It's not necessary to explore every cranny of each level - sometimes all the extra rooms hold are extra monsters. While this means extra money, the cost of repairing your armour can outweigh any gains made!

Try to collect as many probes as possible early on, then instead of crippling yourself dragging them around with you (as I did!), set them all off as soon as possible, making a note of the co-ordinates and order in which future planets are found. Another idiot thing I managed was to land on planets which apparently contained a single square of land - yes, you've got it - who forgot to centre the cross-hairs on the one and only island!

Don't bother with fancy weapons until you have the skill to use them. The monetary system is well judged to match your progress, and better weapons cost far more to arm than simpler, equally effective ones. By the way, peep round corners carefully (and save regularly) as there are some enemies - namely those men with cannons shooting blue cannonballs - who will take you out with one shot! However, careful use of doors as shields can cause enemy fire to bounce back on the nasty opponent, and cause it to effectively commit suicide. But watch out - the same can happen to you as I discovered to my cost! Space Station, here I come.......

LEISURE SUIT LARRY 2

Augustus De Silva's solution romps on. Time now for some holiday antics. Try on the shorts you bought behind the cupboard. Now go to the pool, put on the sunscreen and wait on the sunbed until a woman comes. Don't follow her because she is a KGB agent. Dive into the pool and swim. Get the bikini top under water quickly, get out of the pool and cover yourself with sunscreen again. Sit down, and again, ignore the woman because she is another KGB agent.

Now go back to your cabin and wear your leisure suit. Save your game before entering the other room. Open the night stand drawer and quickly get the sewing kit and leave. Head for the bridge and move the switch on the right hand side without distracting the captain's attention. The alarm should sound, so run for the lifeboat. Jump in, and when in the water wear the wig, use sunscreen and eat the spinach dip. In 10 days you'll be on the beach.

Go south in the vegetation and get a flower then find a gap in the vegetation and you should be at the restaurant. Talk to the man and wait until you are shown to a table. Then sit on the waiting chair, and once you are allowed in get the knife at the buffet bar. Leave, finding another gap, and you should be in a guest room where you should pick up the soap and matches before heading for the barbers.

ZAK MCKRACKEN

Mike Bareham's solution continues. You should now be controlling Annie. Walk to the airport and use the reservations terminal to buy a ticket to Cairo. Walk to the plane the walk outside. Go to the leg on the sphinx with the secret door in it and enter. Use the sphinx map again to find the room with the secret panel in it. When you are there, read the hieroglyphics and push the buttons on the wall in the order they say. Switch to Zak. Use the crayon on the wallpaper map.

Read the strange markings on the wall and make a diagram of them, calling it No. 3. Use the sphinx map again to find your way back to

LET ME KNOW!

If there's any special subject you'd like to see covered in Adventureline, then let me know at the address in the panel on the left.

the airport. Buy a ticket to Kinshasha and board the plane. Walk through the jungle as before until you get back to the village. Enter the shaman's hut and give him the yellow crystal. He will now show you how to use it and you will end up outside the hut. Use the yellow crystal and you will see the wallpaper map. Click on Egypt which is in the middle right of the map. You will now be teleported to the secret room in the top of the pyramid. Walk to the left and pull the lever on the side of the wall.

Switch to Annie and use the sphinx map to find your way out. Go left to the pyramid and through the door. It is very dark in here so use the "what is?" command to find the door. Now go in and walk as far left as you can . Again use the "what is?" command, this time to find the stairs, then go up them. You are now in the room with Zak. Pull the lever in the side of the wall and switch to Zak. Hints for Puzzled Paladins and Confused Conjurers - from Paul Hardy

INGRID'S BACK

And don't you wish she wasn't. Drive the carriage to the top of the hill and ride it down again - then try to cross the bridge with your additional speed. The rock will fly you to the top of the lighthouse if you ask it. At the back of Isfrunt's house "Flopsy, wait for Isfrunt, Hold Isfrunt" To slow the steamroller, follow Giroah and tell Giroah to lie down in front of it. To distract the butler say "Daisy, goto porch, knock, z, knock, z knock, z, knock, z"

ADVENTURE GAME TOOLKIT

A couple of months ago I mentioned HATRACK II, an adventure creator for the Amiga. This month a plug for AGT for the ST. AGT gives two levels of use. Standard level is billed as being for those with no programming experience (honest) and simply requires the use of a word- processor or text editor to create descriptions of locations, objects, action results etc. The Professional level however gives the user the opportunity to use meta language to create complex games with Infocom style look and feel. A good range of adventures written with AGT is currently available, although the standard of the games I've seen is very variable. As with any other programming language, what comes out is directly related to the imagination and precision of what goes in. AGT is well worth a look, and with a registration fee of only $20 if you use the system, not a particularly expensive addition to your collection. AGT and several games written with it are available from the Goodman PD library (0782) 335650. This library has a strong interest in adventures and is well worth contacting for a catalogue (£1.95 for 60 pages which include reviews and articles in addition to software lists) on the above number.

ZORK ZERO

To put the bedbug to sleep, sing to it and it will trouble you no more. Sit on Dimwit's favourite throne and snap fingers to reveal a secret tunnel. In the library, rub armour three time to find something which may be useful.

BEYOND ZORK

To help the minx, erase footprints when you hear the hunter approaching. To slay the Undead Warrior you will need some holy water. Then simply throw vial at warrior. When you have the rabbit's foot, rub it for luck. By the bye, this is still one of the better text games around

RED MOON

Turn the handle to drain the lake. To get the firesword, wear gloves. As soon as the game begins, dig for a crown. To open the safe, turn it. Throw the raisin to create a floating, glowing sphere. Wear the wellies to pass the metal room. Bury your opponents to defeat your enemies easily and stop them reincarnating as ghosts

When you find the moon crystal, get crystal. To slay the dragons, wave fan. A silver crucifix will hold Mandana the Vampire at bay, but a floating glowing sphere will kill him. To stop the demon killing you, rub the line out. In the room of flashing lights, drop the black ball. Wear the bracers to enable you to carry more. Fill the bottle with water, and give it to Kelf, the human who is dying of thirst.

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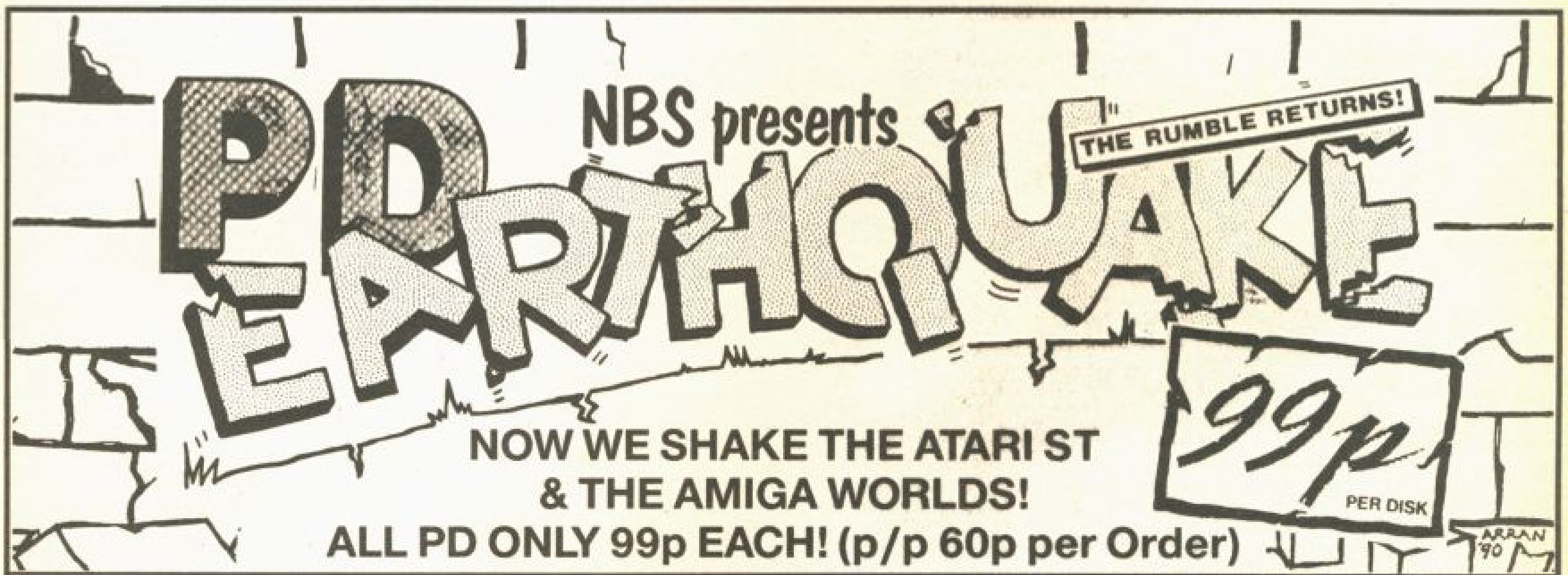

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ATARI ST

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REMEMBER TO STATE ATARI DD

AMIGA PD

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FREEBIES

MARK SMIDDY takes another wander through the wonderful world of PD and Shareware games

CAPTAIN COMIC

£3.50 PC - REQUIRES 256K

WHEN I STARTED WRITING THIS COLUMN OUR ESTEEMED EDITOR CHARGED ME WITH THE TASK OF GOING BOLDLY FORTH AND SEEKING OUT THE BEST IN PD AND SHAREWARE GAMES FOR THE AMIGA, ST AND PC. "THE PC?" I SAID, "WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MINDS WOULD WRITE A GAME FOR THE PC AND GIVE IT AWAY?" MICHAEL DENIO IT SEEMS, IS ONE SUCH PERSON. ALTHOUGH JUDGING BY HIS INTRODUCTION TO COMIC, HE SHARES MY VIEWS ABOUT SHAREWARE. COMIC, INCIDENTALLY IS FREEWARE, BUT IF I UNDERSTAND MIKE CORRECTLY, LIBRARIES SHOULD NOT BE DISTRIBUTING IT.

So what about the game? It's an arcade adventure set in space. You play the main character, Captain Comic faced with the task of recovering three lost treasures stolen from the planet Omsoc and hidden somewhere on planet Tambi. Travelling through eight different - and beautifully illustrated landscapes - the Captain can feast on his Blast-O-Cola, do battle with a variety of bug- eyed and multi-coloured monsters until finally completing his quest.

Visually the game looks much like a simplified version of Shadow Of The Beast and owes much to the EGA graphics and good character design. The sound, as usual, is a let down but this is endemic in almost all PC titles. Also, the control keys initially require the manual dexterity of an Indian rubber man.

Cavils aside, Captain Comic is a real whizz of a title - easy enough for old crankies like me to get somewhere, yet just hard enough to retain that one-more-go appeal and keep the nine-year- old from next door amused for hours. This game may be Freeware but please send Mike something if you like it. There are few good games in the PD and very few of those take advantage of EGA graphics. If you want to try just one PD PC game, get this one.

WE WANT YOU

"Cor blimey mate – they haven't covered Revenge Of The Mutant Hero Terrapins." Well, if I haven't seen it, I can hardly write about it. Drop YOUR PD/Shareware game to Mark Smiddy, Co. ACE Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, LONDON, EC1R 3AU marking your envelope in LARGE LETTERS "PINK PD". Remember – if you don't tell the world, the world won't sign cheques!

ARCADIA AMIGA

£2.50 - MOUSE

When STOS appeared it came with the superb breakout clone, Orbit. The AMOS launch saw no such classics - until now. At last someone (Ronnie Simpson actually) has got round to writing one based on the hugely successful Arkanoid. This excellent (and devilishly clever) version not only comes with no less than 50 screens ready to go - but includes a level designer too.

The game plays very much like Arkanoid: that is you bounce a ball up the screen to try to knock bricks from a wall. Arkanoid added a new dimension to this simple game with bonus barrels. The idea of these is, when collected, they give the bat or ball extra properties. Only seven barrels are built into the game: Slowdown, Magnet, Extra ball, Bomb(!), Wipe out bricks, Hard ball and Elongate bat. There is little doubt more could be added by some enterprising programmer.

SHAMELESS PLUG

**Thanks to the following:
PC: Advantage Shareware - 0242 224340 Amiga: AMOS PD Library - 0942 495261 ST: Goodman PDL - 0782 335650**

Excepting the super title screen, visually the game is not the best of the genre (not bad, just not brilliant) but there's no reason why some kind-hearted artist could not beef the graphics up a bit. This would make a great game brilliant. If this were the case though, then Arcadia should be Licenceware - at this price though, get a copy! Breakout fiends will find it a must - it kept me quiet for hours.

PICK-A-PUZZLE

AMIGA £2.50 - MOUSE

Len Tucker alias Sparx, the man behind the top-selling Jungle Bungle and Thingymajig has done it again. This time, he has created a fiendishly difficult, devilishly complex jigsaw puzzle game for adults. This mention of adults does not have the usual implications, it just means Len thinks it too tricky for kids. Personally, I'd agree - it's darned difficult on Level I - even with the help.

Based on the traditional idea of jigsaws, the game is supplied with eight puzzles in all, with data disks available in the PD and a screen designer in the pipeline. Enthusiasts will find it a real challenge - as will almost anyone who finds violence associated with normal games a turn off. Nice one Len (again).

DRAGON'S TOWER

A very long time ago, when I was still programming games for a living (old programmers never die, they just become critics) I wrote a game for the BBC Micro called Crazee Caverns. But, I hear you cry, why mention this now? Simple, because Dragon's Tower is in many ways similar to Crazee. It was written in machine code and took months of tortuous work to put together. It used some (at the time) ground breaking code like flicker free sprites that didn't affect the background and pixel perfect collision detection.

Crazee's graphics weren't staggering - but par for the time. This is one area where Dragon's Tower scores - the undeniably cute graphics are beautifully drawn and indistinguishable from a commercial title. You play the part of a simple knight, charged (I imagine) with ridding troublesome, fire breathing dragons from your local castle. To this end the game features a vertical scroller something like Flip-it and Magnose or Goldrunner (remember that one?). This is all smooth, precise and faultlessly done - so what has gone wrong?

Simple - or rather, not simple but difficult - too difficult. Dragon's Tower is just too tough to be playable; even my hardened team of play testers could not get off level two. This is a great shame and its author would be well advised to take another look at the game and build in some easier screens. As it stands, Dragon's Tower is a testament to what good games should look like and a demonstration of how they should not play.

DOUGLAS ROCKMOOR

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This is only getting a brief mention this month because it really deserves pride of place. Old hacks should have guessed what it is already; the title should be a clue. It's yet another Boulderdash clone. The difference is this is quite simply the best available anywhere! Catch is you'll need 1Meg to run it. Distributors, Budgie promise a 512K version soon - the full review can wait until then. If you do have a 1Meg machine and you were a fan of the original (C64 and Atari) Boulderdash, get this and see what the ST can do.

ACE FREEBIES WORKS!

ACE knows this column actually results in more sales for participating libraries - at least one has had to be rescued from under the deluge of extra mail. So why, we wonder, are all those nice PC people sitting back and saying it's not for us? Come on folks - if you don't hurry your boat will get sunk by the ST and Amiga crowd. Are you really going to suffer that outrage?

●Mark Smiddy

ACE MAGAZINE DOES NOT CONDONE PIRACY!
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If you need tips with anything from Disk Drives, Printers, games, other software, what to buy or anything else then we can help. We have over 400 games tips and all sorts of other help. If you are interested then send a SAE to Simon Ward (of the Mersey Crew) 80 Vanghan Rd, New Brighton, Wallasey, Merseyside, England L45 1LP or phone at 051-6388577.

HELP gaiven to Kings Quest 1,2,3,4, all Larrys All PQs SQ's SQ1, and 3 and cheats to ST and cheats needed too!!

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★ ★ ★ ***YOU'VE TRIED THE REST!! NOW TRY THE BEST*** ★ ★ ★

THE BLITTER END

SOOPER FAMICOM!

The Super Famicom looks sexier and sexier. Although there are still very few games available for it on the grey market, there's still one thing about the machine that suggests it may deliver a few heavyweight surprises during the coming year. It's the holes, you see, guv...

Most consoles don't have that many holes. There's usually a couple for joysticks, one for the monitor/TV, and the more successful consoles usually manage to have one for cartridges.

The Super Famicom, however, has holes for all sorts of things. And there is now no doubt that one use for them will be the provision of a CD-ROM drive in the 'very near future'.

NEC have already proved that consoles and CD's go well together, with almost 60% of the world's installed base of CD-ROM drives being attached to PC Engines. However, the Super Famicom has sufficient processing clout to do clever things with a CD-ROM, and Nintendo may well be considering adding CD+G and CD audio capability into the peripheral unit. By linking the console to the audio CD market, the company could spread even further the penetration of games units. Good news for all of us...

*

Now that we're safely ensconced in 1991, here are Blitter's awards to the Industry for 1990...

1. The Daftest Business Decision of the Year
NEC for their continued dithering over the PC Engine UK release. Never in the field of games technology has a machine been wanted so badly by so many and held up by so few.

2. The Most Outrageous Hype of the Year
Renegade for their promotion of the Bit Brothers. It's surely no coincidence that the first Renegade Bit Map title will be called *Gods*...

3. The Most Overused Phrase of the Year
Virtual reality. Closely followed by Cowabunga.

4. The Sauciest Ad of the Year
Ubisoft's Ranx ad was..well..rank.

5. Most Disappointing Footy Game of the Year
Er...all of them. *Kick Off 2* is not a footy game, it's a way of life.

6. The BBC Repeats Award for Deja Vu
Elite, for giving us more of what we've seen before than we've ever seen before.

7. The Failed-In-Wales-Again Award
SAM. You'll never play it again...

8. The Most Sensible Business Decision of the Year
The Lynx price cut.

9. The Best Attended Press Conference of the Year
Microprose's launch for *M1 Tank Platoon* at Bovington Camp. The food, for 30, was barely sufficient for Wild Bill Stealey, Martin PR Man Moth, and the ACE Editor.

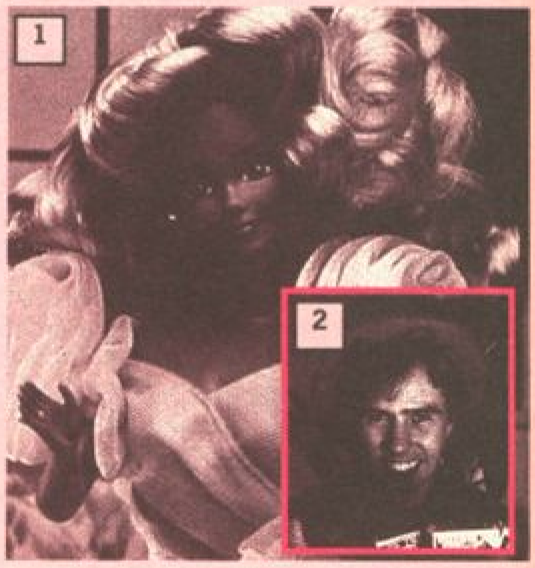
10. The Most Obvious Piece of Padding at The End of An Issue
There have been no nominations for this category.

*

And now, to close, a word from our new Editor, Jim Douglas.

'I aim to make this a magazine for mature readers. And knockers to anyone who disagrees...'

● ***Blit Blit!***



ANOTHER CHANCE TO SHINE!

Yes, we're giving you another chance to demonstrate your incredible wit and repartee. Our photograph shows two well-known industry figures. We want to know who they are and what their New Year Resolutions were. Send your entry on a postcard to ACE Celebrity Resolutions, Pink Pages, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU. The usual £25 worth of software for the most inspired entry – so don't forget your address and machine format. Closing date February 8th 1991.

NEXT MONTH'S RED HOT!

...and we mean it! Not only will you be able to luxuriate in a full exclusive preplay of *Midwinter 2: Flames of Freedom*, but there'll also be a special cover-mounted gift to commemorate Mike Singleton's latest megagame.

Hot on the outside, blazing within...with a sneak preview of *Populous 2*, the latest news from the massive CES show in Las Vegas, development reports from Electronic Arts' US office, and up-to-the-minute information on the latest Californian silicon weirdoes. And if that's not enough for you, we'll also have the second part of our Greatest Games of All Time listing and a whacky report from the Toy Fair.

ACE 42, out on Friday, February 8th – burning with the white heat of games technology!

DEAR NEWSAGENT,
I like the magazine so much, I want to buy the company. Unfortunately, because I am not as rich as that bloke from the shaver and nose-and-ear hair trimmer ads, I guess I'll have to settle for a copy of the very reasonably priced March issue of ACE Magazine (Advanced Computer Entertainment), due out on Friday February 8th. I will be forever in your debt. And I will get my *free cover mounted gift!*

My name: ....

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THINK 8, THINK ACE!

Don't forget: ACE has always been published on the first Thursday of every month, but it now appears on the shelves on the 8th of every month instead.

The new system will make a big difference in terms of coverage and consistency, so **think 8, think ACE!** (©EMAP Jingles 1991)

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THEY ARE IN LOVE WITH THE SAME WOMAN AND ULTIMATELY, IN A NAIL BITING CLIMATIC FINALE, ARE GOING TO END UP POINTING GUNS AT EACH OTHER. ONLY ONE CHARACTER CAN WALK AWAY FROM THIS SHOWDOWN - **BUT THAT'S JUST THE WAY OF THE WEST.**

ocean

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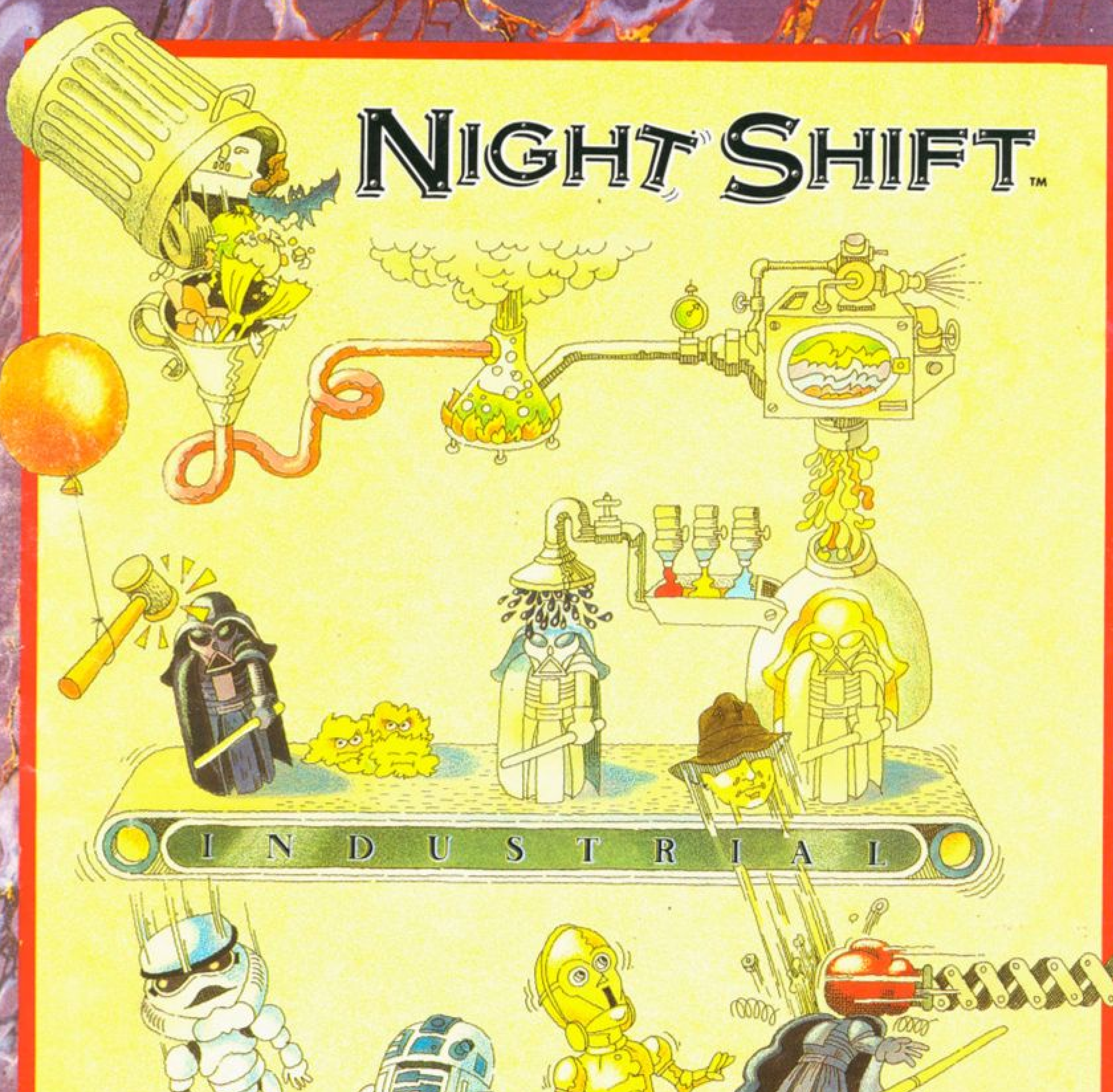
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